

Corporations and Human Liberty: A Study in Exploitation

I. Real and Artificial Persons

JOHN C. RAWE

Possibly the greatest of these struggles lies just ahead of us at this present time — not a struggle of Revolutionists against established order, but of the ordinary man to hold fast to those rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” which were vouchsafed to us in the past in vision and on parchment.—James Truslow Adams, Preface TO THE EPIC OF AMERICA.

ON AN April day in 1865 General Robert E. Lee offered the surrender of his sword. The soldiers in blue and the soldiers in gray returned to their homes and to the arts of peace. As far as actual warfare could accomplish it, liberty had been won for the Negro; and for the future, as a guarantee of liberty for all, there was the Fourteenth Amendment. In the light of the past fifty years of American history, however, this constitutional instrument for the liberation of the black man, has by a queer sort of irony given the opportunity for the economic enslavement of both the white man and the black man. For this same Four-

teenth Amendment has given rise to a legal confusion which makes it possible for judges to place mere creatures of the state — *i.e.*, “free” societies such as joint stock companies — on the same plane with human beings. It is the unfettered power and licentious “liberty” of this type of artificial person which is beginning to make America conscious of the fact that a new slave master is rising out of the very amendment which was intended to exterminate all slave masters.

Our statesmen are using the term “economic slavery” today; and all Americans, more especially those who are in the ranks of the unemployed, deprived of private property, standing in the bread lines, and facing starvation, are beginning to realize that their liberties are to a large extent more nominal than real.

In these two papers I propose to show how joint stock corporations under constitutional protection bring economic slavery to the masses; why, on solid legal grounds, constitutional liberties cannot be justified for them; and finally, in the constructive part, I propose to point out ways and means, peaceful constitutional ways and means, for the ordinary American citizen to regain and hold fast to the rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”.

When at the close of the colonial days the Constitution was drawn up and ratified, it was an instrument that set forth the natural rights of natural citizens who engaged in business, small but economically sound, in which there was complete personal responsibility for all debts that such business might incur. And even if the country had at that time been filled with gigantic joint stock corporations, in all likelihood the Constitution would have been restricted to the enumeration

and legal guarantee of the personal rights of natural persons. Each stock corporation's charter would certainly, then, have been considered to be the full source of the corporation's power. But business had not yet incorporated itself when Americans, who regarded their human rights as a priceless treasure, conceived the plan of insuring their social and individual well-being in a Constitution which their government was to follow. From the very beginning this government pledged itself to be the champion of certain well defined natural rights of natural citizens. Nothing was said or understood by implication in the Constitution concerning any rights of joint stock corporations. If there were any such artificial legal persons in existence at that time, they were too few to be considered, and if they had been considered, their charters would have been taken to be their sole constitutions.

However, since that time the stock corporation has become a real "problem" citizen. This particular kind of artificial person created by the several states and the Federal government has a vast progeny, and he guards himself and all his offspring against both the government and natural citizens by two constitutions: the constitution intended for natural citizens, and his own constitution or charter. These "problem" legal citizens, who form a special class of artificial persons, have been created by legislative "fiat" — in each case through a charter or contract between the particular state and the particular joint stock corporation — on such a grand scale that today's business is practically in the hands of joint stock corporations. These corporations contribute such high power to business that it now has many of the properties of an explosive —

prices fall from such extreme highs to extreme lows over such short periods of time that many debts become quasi-usurious from abnormal changes in the purchasing power of money before the debts are liquidated; private ownership is uprooted, and where ownership does not pass into the hands of a few, at least the control, which was at one time an essential property of ownership, passes into the hands of a very small body of men. The financial vigour of two hundred of these artificial persons has been great enough to take eighty per cent of all our industrial wealth from our natural citizens and lesser artificial persons in a few years.

If our Federal government and the various states had foreseen the present complex economic problems, in all likelihood they would have made fewer artificial persons of this type. At least the sovereign powers would have had, from the very beginning of the "careers" of these business corporations, a clear understanding that the Constitution was not for them; that their whole life and the rights flowing therefrom were to be contained in a charter that would have been very cautiously and specifically drawn up on the part of the states in order that corporate high-powered use of any natural rights of natural persons could never have been vindicated in any way, together with limited liability for debts and special privilege of franchise.

Our state and Federal governmental agencies could then have forestalled maldistribution of wealth and its consequent injustice, prevented ever recurring depressions, eliminated monopolistic "wars", and curbed endless exploitation of labour, if in the very first charter and in every subsequent charter granted to a joint

stock corporation it had been made unmistakably clear that the rights to be enjoyed by such corporation were to be only contractual rights — rights arising out of the chartered agreement and corporate statute, rights which the state or Federal government might in special circumstances have the right and duty to rescind or abrogate in view of the fact that the Constitution imposes upon the sovereign as his first duty the general public, social, and individual welfare of all natural citizens as distinguished from artificial persons. If this had been the uncontroverted position from the beginning, then the stock companies could never have claimed the constitutional natural rights nor have persuaded the courts to make decisions which applied the “immunities and privileges” of the Fourteenth Amendment to artificial persons in business.* The Fourteenth Amendment involved the question of liberty and slavery of natural persons only; and in the same way, in the remainder of the Constitution, it was never intended to take cognizance of an “immunity or privilege” or “natural” inherent right of a non-essential legal entity established by mere contract, or the liberty or slavery of an artificial person of a type which of itself can claim no intrinsic right to existence. Liberty

* In decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States during the twenty-year period 1890-1910, there were 529 cases involving the Fourteenth Amendment. Of these, 19 concerned the Negro race, 289 related to corporations. [*Editor's Note.* The relevant passages in the Fourteenth Amendment, which was designed to implement the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, read as follows: “. . . No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States. Nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”]

and slavery are terms which are applicable only to natural persons — persons of flesh and blood and intellect and free will. These constitutional terms may be indirectly predicated of such artificial persons as the state may be bound to create to protect the natural rights of natural persons, but such constitutional terms can never be correctly applied to a mere contractual person such as a joint stock corporation which owes its existence absolutely to the will of the state, which in this case is not bound by the just claims of any other natural or supernatural society to which the state may be obligated. Grant any such artificial person as the joint stock corporation constitutional rights and it is potentially more powerful than the sovereign power that created it, because in our case the Constitution sets very definite limits upon the sovereign.

II

The “immunities and privileges” of a joint stock corporation are not to be found in a constitutional document such as ours, intended for the legally secured natural rights of human beings. The privileges and the immunities of a joint stock corporation are correctly found only in the terms of each company’s individual charter. And this charter is in every case a mere private contract, interpreted perhaps by corporate statutes, and entered into between the sovereign power and the newly created stock corporation. This charter is not a constitution in the same sense that our national or state constitutions are, because in the charter the state grants only certain definite rights, whereas in the national or state constitutions certain rights which are reserved against the state, and not granted,

form the main and all important part of the documents.

The states may grant privileges and immunities in charters for joint stock corporations but they have no authority to bind themselves to such privileges and immunities at a time when the rights of the natural persons must first be safeguarded, as in the case where the corporate privilege or immunity is clearly working to the detriment of the commonweal as it is primarily constituted by natural citizens. When a right conceded to a joint stock corporation or any such type of artificial person comes into direct or indirect conflict with the rights reserved and secured to a natural citizen in the Constitution, the state, even though it may have granted such a right to a corporation, is now bound to abolish it.

For example a state cannot by contract or charter give a corporation the rights which enable it either directly or indirectly to establish a monopoly over some "commodity good" which does not constitute a "natural" monopoly. The state cannot grant such rights for the simple reason that the Constitution forbids the state to appropriate to itself the ownership of such property destined to be private and distributed. State creation of a business corporation with power and opportunity to own all or any kind of property which is by nature distributable is not very far removed from state ownership itself — an ownership which is absolutely denied to the state, both by the laws of nature and on constitutional grounds. None of our state governments nor the Federal government are property owners of primary right. A state may have only such property as is needed to fulfill its purpose

of making life and property secure for all its natural citizens according to the Constitution, for it is the constitutional duty of all our governmental agencies to guarantee to each and every one of us ownership as a natural right, preceding our citizenship and constitutional agreements.

And yet these same governmental agencies, chiefly the courts, have, if not proximately, then remotely, enabled two hundred corporations to build up two hundred practical monopolies in many enterprises that are not monopolistic by nature — that is, the ownership of such property is easily and without detriment to the public welfare beneficially distributable among many citizens. Elastic charters erroneously pinned to an even more elastic national Constitution or state Constitution have enabled these two hundred artificial persons, mere creatures of the state, to accomplish under a false claim of private property what the state itself had no right to accomplish.

Business law recognizes two classes of persons: the artificial class with or without limited liability, and the natural class with complete liability for debts. The natural person or citizen is an individual human being. The artificial person or corporation is remotely a natural person or group of natural persons, upon whom the state has conferred an artificial personality, and proximately, the artificial person is the legal entity created by charter to perform acts or enjoy franchises which to merely natural persons might be impossible. Natural persons owe their existence to God and with regard to them the state has very definite duties. The duties of a state with reference to a corporation, however, are not so clearly defined.

III

Traditional Scholasticism is the only philosophy which gives us an adequate framework of societies, rationally conceived, properly co-ordinated, harmoniously organic and vital. It teaches us that the state itself is a natural perfect society which arises from nature and is formed by the coalescence of a number of other natural but imperfect societies, namely, families which unite for the purpose of enjoying rights and attaining material good through common effort in a civil society. It teaches us that there is another society, the Church of Christ, a supernatural society which is also a perfect society and co-exists with the perfect natural society which is the state. It teaches us that in merely civil affairs the state is independent of the Church. In purely spiritual affairs the Church is independent of the state. In mixed affairs the final decision belongs to the Church, which thus has authority over such mixed objects not by reason of the objects themselves, which are material, but because they affect the welfare of the Church in promoting her higher and supernatural ends.

The family and the state then are natural societies, and the Church is a supernatural society, co-existing with, but not in conflict with right ordered civil society. Beyond these three important societies there are any number of lesser societies; some whose rights to existence are based indirectly upon the laws of nature, as when special association is necessary for the untrammelled enjoyment of some natural right; and then there are other societies whose existence is strictly "free", *i.e.*, in no wise based on the very nature of things

either directly or indirectly. Whether these last-named societies shall exist in any manner or not, it is always the duty of the state to determine in the proper exercise of its authority.

The state must recognize and maintain the family as a natural but imperfect society. It need not, however, be given the form of an incorporated society.

The state must recognize and maintain the Church of Christ inviolable as a supernatural society and a perfect co-existing society as well. If any of the units of this religious society must be incorporated to secure the proper ends of their existence the state is bound to grant the legal form of incorporation.

The lesser societies whose rights of existence are based indirectly upon the laws of nature, to such an extent that natural rights would not be secure without such association — namely, such societies as municipal governments; industrial associations (such as an *Industrial Code Corporations* — a very special type of organic corporation which is explained at length in another part of this paper); co-operatives, whose sole basis in operation is the mutual help of many individuals; eleemosynary associations, cultural and educational associations, et cetera — the state must recognize and incorporate as functional societies.* The state should always give these societies the form of legal incorporation wherever such legal recognition will foster the ends proposed by such associations, and if the ends of a bona fide society of this type cannot be

* LEHRBUCH DER NATIONAL-OKONOMIE by *Heinrich Pesch*, S. J. Volumes I and II, *passim*. In this important work the author makes the application of the traditional Scholastic theory to the modern industrial conditions of society.

secured or achieved without incorporation the state is bound to grant legal incorporation.

The "free" societies, *i.e.*, associations which are not required either directly or indirectly for the preservation of natural rights, the state may recognize and foster and give legal incorporation provided always that any such society does not interfere with the rights of individuals or with the rights of any other society or association which bases its claim either directly or indirectly on the laws of nature. To protect the just claims of natural societies and societies which are indirectly natural and real persons, the state is bound to regulate the activities of "free" societies accordingly. If, however, the rights of such first mentioned societies and real persons continue to be abused, then the state must remove the legal recognition of the "free" society and take whatever measures are necessary to bring about the abolition of such a "free" society altogether.

It is evident at once from the classification of societies as given above that the special society with which we are concerned in these pages, namely, the joint stock corporation, belongs to the last mentioned class of "free" societies. Men do not form private joint stock corporations because they are natural societies arising from natural laws, nor can such joint stock corporations ever be said to be indirectly natural. They are not necessary for the protection of any natural rights which can be realized only by association. Joint stock corporations are "free" societies of privilege from every point of view, societies over whose very existence and kind of existence the state is always the complete arbiter.

IV

In the life of nations the natural person has only with much difficulty and trial and suffering enjoyed and preserved his natural rights. The artificial person, on the other hand (and here as in general in this paper we speak only of the joint stock corporation, an artificial person in business which is considered to be private in the legal sense), has in the comparatively short period of its existence, with much success in the public forum, preserved all rights expressly granted in its charter and has established for itself the exercise and enjoyment of many natural rights and constitutional privileges and immunities, even to such an extent that this type of artificial person has become the usurper many times of the natural endowment of the real and superior person in the legal world. So great is the present power of business corporations that a question that was once clear is now obscure; namely, Is business law primarily for the corporation or is it primarily for the natural person? Let us repeat the correct answer clearly: business law, as any other branch of civil law, is primarily for the temporal and economic good and indirectly for the spiritual good of the natural person. It is by the natural person and for the natural person that national government and civil law in all its forms are established.

The natural person comes into existence by generation, takes up his place in society for a few years, enjoys his inherent rights on a small scale because of limitations of capital, time, energy, and resources, practices honesty or injustice, charity or greed with reference to his fellow citizens and then after a short

span of years is removed from the economic world by death.

The artificial person, on the contrary, comes into existence by a "fiat" of the state, and in its right of perpetual succession is as "immortal" as the state which brings it into existence. This person enters the business world with capital that can be inflated without special limit, with time that may easily extend its existence into subsequent generations, with energies ever renewed by changing directorates—limited liability directorates whose consciences are extremely attenuated in moral matters. This legal person takes possession of the business world finally with resources that are multiplied by rising profits and privileged franchise, with resources that are often neither checked by competition nor touched with the leaven of charity. The practice of injustice may assume national, even international proportions, and continue for an indefinite period that may extend through many generations, without any day of direct and responsible retribution on the part of the corporation itself, unless the state should call it to account, and but seldom then, for in these days when the state is calling such artificial persons to give an account, they claim the natural immunities and privileges set down in a Constitution struck off for the social and individual well-being of natural persons—a group of persons whom these artificial persons so little resemble in other respects.

If the individual natural person in business must occasionally be curbed in his activities in order to protect the property rights of other individuals, then, certainly, it is apparent how much more need of control must be exercised over the artificial person such as

the joint stock corporation. A natural person cannot, because of limitations of time and capital, acquire the sole individual right of enjoying all the private property connected with a given enterprise, thereby depriving all his fellow citizens of the enjoyment of a similar right. He cannot, to take a concrete example, as a farmer in the short space of his life acquire all the farm land in his county, thereby taking away all private ownership of farm lands from his neighbours in the county. The farmer's natural limitations and full liability for all debts are a check on any such career of appropriation. But an incorporated legal joint stock farmer could, on the other hand, by stock manipulation and unfair practice, by the enjoyment of perpetual succession through generations of natural citizens and limited liability for debts, by merger and holding company, easily enough come into the possession of all agricultural lands in the county, thereby depriving all other persons, natural or artificial, of the ownership or control of any land. Perhaps the state might recover such land for its inhabitants by the exercise of the power of Eminent Domain, but it would have to pay an exorbitant price and probably defend itself against a plea of constitutional immunity.

Joint stock corporations have repeatedly proven their ability to get the monopoly or its equivalent in any given enterprise. In what was once a field of free competition it took the joint stock corporation, brought into existence by governmental contract, securing itself by government franchise and constitutional privilege, to concentrate wealth, ownership, and control in the hands of a comparative few. The legal guarantee of limited liability in case of bankruptcy

and the use of natural rights with judicial approbation have given the incorporated companies a power with respect to ownership which has no parallel in the whole history of private property. There is only one kind of ownership which exceeds it in extent and that is state ownership — the illegal ownership assumed unto itself by an irresponsible, tyrannical, communistic state.

In fact this extensive and uncontrolled use of natural rights and special privilege on the part of joint stock corporations in our country, has made it well nigh impossible for natural persons to enjoy similar rights to any great extent, and this even under a government which has for the most part sincerely tried to remain true to its obligations to natural citizens in so far as these obligations are enumerated in the Constitution. No one will accuse our government of tyrannical communistic activities, nor has it ever intended to sell out its citizens and their belongings to any one of several joint stock corporations of its own creation. It is the joint stock corporations who are forcing the sale, a chosen incorporated few who forget that we are human beings and that our government is set up primarily to protect us and not the joint stock corporations from political and economic disasters.

In a legal set-up where in theory and in principle all natural persons have the right of private ownership and where in practice the state is bound by the Constitution to guarantee the right of ownership to all natural persons, is it permissible for the state by some overt act or only by implication from some other act, so to create a corporation that it may have the power and the privilege to take all the enjoyment of the

right — namely, acquire the ownership of the entire commodity or commodities? The state itself would not have the right to take the ownership, unless, of course, the public good clearly demanded it in a particular case. And yet by contract, by a charter, protected by prevalent constitutional applications, the state gives the power and the privilege to some artificial person which in one economic enterprise after another puts itself in the position of the sole practical owner. Steel, oil, aluminum, railroad, telephone, radio, telegraph, munitions, motors, et cetera, have for all practical purposes become the exclusive property of artificial persons, covetous of every privilege and claiming greater powers than flow from the source of their charters — the constitutional governments. How many natural persons with their limitations of time and capital could ever accomplish the possession of such monopolies and even if they could, would not the state correctly regard such exclusive use of the right of private property on the part of a few citizens as an infringement of the property rights of other citizens, and would not the state be obligated to take the proper measures to secure the public good of all — the private ownership or at least an easy opportunity for such ownership in the case of each individual citizen?

Natural persons are for the most part incapable of acquiring a monopoly in any given business enterprise, and even if they did such monopolies would cease, if not with the death of the owner, then very soon thereafter, for the reason that there would be a distribution among the heirs. An artificial person, on the contrary, frequently enough acquires a practical mo-

nopoly and can through privilege and limited liability and its perpetual succession sustain such a monopoly indefinitely. The point is this: natural persons are not effective monopolizers, but the joint stock corporation operating in accordance with present judicial uncertainty and legislative obscurity is an effective monopolizer. Certainly the purpose of any existing anti-trust law is defeated by a distinction according to which a monopoly *per se* is not contrary to law, but that only the unfair practice to which a monopoly gives rise is contrary to law. If a natural person or if a state acquired all the property in a certain business we could, in view of fundamental law which guarantees ownership in general to be in the easy reach of all, clearly cite the case as being in contravention of law securing pre-existing rights. And yet when an artificial joint stock corporation becomes the sole practical owner we, with present distinctions, maintain that the full property rights of individuals continue to be safe until such corporation really indulges in some unfair practice. In the courts there is a tradition that the Congress forbade not monopolies *per se* but only monopolistic unfair practice when it passed anti-trust laws. Is there any justification for the judicial conclusion that the legislators did not intend the abolition of the monopoly itself? Antecedently to any such legislation of a special kind, the Constitution had implied the right and imposed the duty on the government it created to secure that the individual citizens enjoy distributivism* in private property wherever special circumstances did not make it imperative that property be devoted

* *Editor's Note.* Or "distributism", the word coined by Hilaire Belloc for the system of widely held private property.

to a public purpose for the good of all. And consequently the state has never claimed any right to own property in the nation which is of its nature distributable. And in the case of a natural person which had acquired all available property devoted to a given enterprise the government could according to fundamental law and in all justice maintain that such an act of complete ownership, independently of any subsequent unfair practice, would constitute an unlawful interference with the rights of other citizens.

An honest interpretation of our whole jurisprudence and our social order (and not only a particular phase of it) gives us but one warranted conclusion — corporate business monopolies are not consonant with constitutional guarantees of property for the individual citizen. In order that property, ownership, and control may remain truly private and distributed, monopolistic joint stock corporations must die by legislative decree, and if the intention of “death” to the monopoly itself was not clear in the old anti-trust laws, the legislators have the power and the duty to make that intention clear and unmistakable now, especially when the facts presented by an unprecedented economic crisis make it evident that it is not greater concentration of property but greater distribution of property which will save the nation from economic catastrophe and political upheaval.

By what authority may a joint stock corporation place itself at the head of a practical monopoly? When we consider the vast body of existing law, we see that the creation and continuance of such an artificial person defeats the constitutional governmental duty to protect the rights of private property and its enjoy-

ment on the part of natural persons. The joint stock corporation is in reality a created business adjunct, destined to take a supervised part in business and subject to such modifications as the public good of private citizens may demand. The natural rights vested by the laws of nature and more or less clearly reiterated in our own written laws should not be confused with the rights granted by way of charter to a joint stock corporation — the legal entity which is altogether the result of legislative "fiat". The denial of natural rights to an artificially created joint stock corporation should not at once lead men to say that the Constitution is being violated and that natural rights are being trampled upon. It is better logic to regard a curb upon such corporate power as a judicial effort on the part of natural persons to restrain a monster of their own creation, thereby protecting themselves. In the regulation and control of a corporate entity such as the joint stock corporation, even though that control involves complete dissolution, it is generally speaking wrong to maintain that any natural rights are at stake. Such regulation would, of course, always be justified in proportion as it was evidently intended and needed as a safeguard of the natural rights inhering in natural private persons. If the joint stock corporation is always defended in the exercise of special franchise, in its limited liability privilege, in its right of perpetual succession, in its strength of capital factor, and in perhaps other chartered business and political privileges, and beyond all this in the exercise of all natural rights and constitutional guarantees, then the state is no longer in a position to secure the good of the commonweal for it is brought face to face with a

monster business personality which refuses to recognize either the necessity of the common good or its superior claim in a well-ordered society of human beings.

Our past and present policy has been to allow steel, oil, munitions, railroad, telephone, telegraph and many other classes of private distributable property to fall into the monopolistic control of some long surviving joint stock corporation. All this is legally encouraged until an Attorney General or Senate Investigator, in spite of all corporate secrecy and complexity of manipulation, uncovers some unfair monopolistic deal or general unjust practice in the markets. Then, there is spectacular exposure for a few days and soon all is shrouded in a new and deeper secrecy or perhaps (and this is rarely done) the order is given or steps are taken to bring about the dissolution of the combine. The old stock is then transferred into the hands of a newly created joint stock corporation, or perhaps three or four new ones who later seem by prearrangement to have but one survivor — the real heir of the old monster. And in a few short years or even months we have a new monopoly all over again. It is more correct to say that the old one was never destroyed. It simply escaped its pursuers. In such a vicious circle we see one governmental agency defeating the purpose of another governmental agency, the legislature's purpose is defeated by the courts and the action of the courts is circumvented by legislative grants of new charters and meanwhile the artificial person, the joint stock corporation, runs away with the proverbial side of bacon — more correctly, in this instance, the whole hog.

V

In view of such an impasse in the realm of business incorporation, is it any wonder that a state should reach the conclusion that it must make of itself a joint stock corporation in order that it might have at least the powers equal to any joint stock corporation that it may have called into existence? In one sense when we consider the present strength of industrial corporations and an apparent corresponding position of weakness of the state, it can be easily explained why some citizens argue that the formation of "The United States Incorporated" would restore the balance of power. But where will the state ever get the legal authority for such an incorporation of itself? The Constitution confers upon the state no such power to incorporate itself as a private owner, nor will the people of this country ever amend the Constitution in such wise that unqualified ownership becomes the constitutional right of the "State Incorporated". There is nothing quite as absurd, in its ultimate analysis, in the light of present jurisprudence, as to speak of "The United States Incorporated", or "The United States and Company". Any such solution as that of the incorporation of the United States itself as a joint stock corporation together with anything like the retention of our old, but very satisfactory Constitution, is unthinkable. "The United States Incorporated" involves a vicious circle and several legal contradictions: the Constitution creates the particular type of government, restricts its rights very definitely; then the government, assuming in this case ungranted authority, sets itself up as a civil joint stock corporation enjoying

all the governmental powers and in addition to these, as a corporation, it now receives the powers reserved to the people in the Constitution because it now becomes an artificial person of the business type and as such will, after the manner of corporations in business, take unto itself constitutional privileges and immunities. What the Constitution withholds from the government would in such a case be then interpreted as being the right of the government by virtue of its rôle as a joint stock corporation. And it is not a mistake to suppose that the government, if any pretense was needed, would regard itself as a joint stock corporation in the very same light as it has been forced by circumstance and hesitant judicial action to regard other joint stock corporations. Such legal technicality as is involved here makes the Constitution with its reservation of rights a mere mockery.

(To be concluded)

The Mystery of Sakkarah

A Problem in Cultural Origins

RALPH ADAMS CRAM

WHERE the yellow scarp of the Libyan Desert drops suddenly to the green levels of the Nile meadows, rises the sombre mass of the Step-Pyramid of Sakkarah, the mastaba tomb of Pharaoh Zoser. The waves of tawny sand had billowed around it for four thousand years, partially burying its base and whatever remained of its entourage of tombs, temples, altars, and walls that had survived the depredations of Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, and Coptic Christians. Until a few years ago no one suspected that much if anything was hidden by this unquiet sea of sand, and it was not until the late Cecil Firth, whose death last year was such a loss to the cause of Egyptian archaeology, began in 1927 the excavations that have revealed such amazing facts, that anyone dreamed that here were hidden architectural remains that would revolutionize all theories as to the origin and evolution of the art of architecture in Egypt.

In writing of this matter I must do so only as an unlearned observer, with no archaeological knowledge whatever, but the facts are there to be seen, and it is perhaps admissible for an amateur to consider them and to suggest certain implications and possible inferences, submitting these for the testing of the trained archaeologist, without dogmatism and with becoming modesty.

Until very recently it had generally been assumed that the Pyramid of Sakkarah was a crude and rather hesitating step between an early barbarism and the full accomplishment of Cheops and his successors at Gizeh. Built, as was obvious, of a rough, dark, friable limestone in small units and of a crude type of construction, it was apparently an example of the work of unskilful men, and it took its place naturally as an interesting stage of evolutionary growth. It was very certainly of the Third Dynasty (*c.* 2780-2720 B.C.) and the burial place of Zoser. Behind him lay an historical period of only about four hundred years to the epoch of Menes who united the Kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt and built his new capital of Memphis.

The nature and aspect of that city were, and still are, unknown, for Greek colonists and predatory caliphs have left literally not one stone upon another, assuming that stone was there employed (as we know now was the case at the contemporary Sakkarah) and not simply mud brick, palm trunks, and "wattle and daub". Moreover the many sarcophagi of the Third and Fourth Dynasties, such as that of Mycerinus, are very clearly representations in some sort of Memphite palaces and they demonstrate, not hovels or fortified dwellings of mud brick, but architectural works of high quality, designed with great delicacy; fine in proportion, admirable in composition and the relation of parts, and at least equal to Greek work of 2250 years later on in history.

And here is where the architectural mystery of Sakkarah comes in, for Memphis and Sakkarah synchronized in time, the first being the city of the living,

the second the city of the dead. Here, nearly 3000 years B.C., appeared, in either place, an architecture — and, at the latter place, a sculpture as well — of very notable quality, delicate, subtle, and refined, and also perfect in craftsmanship and technique: an art that inevitably implies a culture of very high order. It has no known antecedents; no stages have been discovered that could mark its evolution, while it was never again used during the subsequent 3500 years of Egyptian history, and is, indeed, like its almost contemporary sculpture, of a finer and more refined quality than its successors. There is a certain line of development in the case of the bas-reliefs that leads back through the “Palette of Namer” (probably First Dynasty, *c.* 3200 B.C.), already completely developed in technique, to the steli and other fragmentary remains of the time of the mythical “King Scorpion” and “King Serpent” — that prehistoric art that can only date back a century or two behind the very competent work of the time of Menes and the First Dynasty. But in architecture there is nothing, nor is there any suggestion of the provenance of this unique art of Sakkarah, unless indeed we accept the ancient tradition that a long-lost temple at Edfu, which was also the work of the architect of Sakkarah, was built from designs “sent down from heaven to earth in the vicinity of Memphis”.

In any case, this tradition preserves the fact that this five-thousand-year-old architecture now revealed at Sakkarah was looked on as miraculous in its nature and not, as in the case of every subsequent style, the result of an evolutionary process, the steps in which can be traced.

II

What then did Cecil Firth discover at this sand-buried necropolis, that has upset all preconceived ideas as to the beginnings of Egyptian architecture? First that the Step-Pyramid was not at first simply a clumsy piling up of rough rubble, but a carefully designed structure of five stages with a very subtle relation between the heights of the several stories, and that the great structure, two hundred feet high, was originally faced with the finest white limestone, cut with perfect precision and jointed with consummate workmanship, superior indeed in excellence and accuracy to the later work at Gizeh. The pyramid was the towering central feature of a great assemblage of temples, tombs, halls, and colonnades surrounded by walls some thirty feet high enclosing a great quadrangle or temenos about eight hundred feet by fifteen hundred. This wall also is of fine white limestone, now the colour of old ivory, and is broken in its length by a regular sequence of square, boldly projecting bastions, each scored by vertical pilasters, or rather sinkages in the surface that leave the narrow areas of wall surface in pilaster form. To the north was once a great mortuary temple, now wholly destroyed, with nothing remaining but the stylobate and a few scattered fragments of the superstructure, not enough to permit any clear idea of the nature of the temple itself, except that it was very certainly of more delicate scale than the work of later dynasties.

East and south, however, Firth had better fortune. First came the two tombs of the royal daughters of Pharaoh Zoser, Int-kas and Hetep-hementi. To say

that these architectural façades are astonishing is to put it mildly. In considering them it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that they date from about 2750 B.C. and that back of them, neither at Memphis, Heliopolis, nor at any other place has there ever been found anything in the shape of architecture that leads up to them in any minutest degree. There is literally nothing except the dolmens or other megalithic monuments — crude, unwrought stones set on end with other flat stones laid on top. Neolithic man comes up out of the darkness of the prehistoric to this desert edge, and at this point a high culture, a complete and perfectly articulated civilization, and an architectural style comparable with that of Greece in 500 B.C. reveal themselves in their definite completeness.

For this is true of the tomb fronts and the other monuments of the great enclosure. The tombs themselves are façades of delicate white limestone in small units, with very slender, tapering, engaged columns supporting a corona or cornice in the form of the arc of a circle. The columns are fluted in concave sections like the best Greek Doric of more than two thousand years later, and the capitals are neither lotus nor palm as in subsequent dynasties, but of a curious leaf form folded back and down at the tops of the columns. A single door, off centre, gives access to the tomb itself, and here the jambs are slightly convex in profile.

It is all very simple and architectonic, while the workmanship is of the finest character. The jointing is precise, the alignment and sections and arrises of the column-fluting as delicate and exact as at the Parthenon in Athens. The most interesting point, however, is again that here is not only a new style with noth-

ing anywhere coming before, but it is a style never used later in Egypt. These slender, tapering columns bear no resemblance to the clumsy and crudely fluted shafts found in tombs of much later date, as at Beni Hassan, and even less to the papyrus and lotus and palm columns with their gigantic size, their heavy proportions, and their bulbous entasis. The curved corona is also unique, giving place almost at once to the horizontal cavetto with its bold projection. Here is a style of almost Ionic delicacy and refinement, different indeed to the heavy and ominous type that so quickly succeeded and held place thereafter for more than two thousand years. Where did it come from and why did it fail to survive?

From the tombs of the Princesses southward, between the base of the Pyramid and the great wall, are the foundations of another temple, flanked along the west side with a range of minute chapels, only the lower stone-courses of which remain. The function of these chapels or cubicles is unknown, but in them are to be seen, cut in fine stone, a survival of a more primitive, or at least domestic art, the simile of low fences of posts and wattle. Here also, as yet unsorted, are other capitals like those of the tombs, many of them pierced horizontally by circular holes as though intended to receive awning or roof poles. Further on is a great square mass of masonry that may have been the base of an altar, or the throne of the Pharaoh; and then, at the southeast angle of the enclosing wall is the entrance to what is undoubtedly the first hypostyle hall in all Egypt. Compared with Karnak, or indeed with any other temple, it is modest in scale, the columns having originally been but twenty feet high.

The plan is unique for the columns do not stand free, but on each side of the central processional path are joined to the outer walls by transverse walls, so forming a double series of chapels. The columns themselves are much more sturdy than those on the tombs. They also taper but here the flutings are convex, while there were no true capitals, only a sort of "flounced" binding ring at the top which is repeated also at the bottom.

At the west end, where this hall opens on the great south court, is a sort of pillared pronaos, the eight columns being joined in pairs by walls running at right angles to those in the main apartment. This sort of vestibule is closed by the lower courses of what was once a thick and massive wall, possibly prototype of the later pylon, and pierced by a single doorway on the line of the main axis. Here is one more of the curious survivals of an earlier and domestic form of building, used, it may be, symbolically: the lower part of a door opened at an angle of forty-five degrees, but of stone and bonded in with the masonry of the great wall itself.

Here then was a noble and highly articulated piece of architecture, set out with perfect accuracy and sureness of mind and hand, as carefully designed as a Greek temple and marked by that perfection of cutting and jointing and texture of surface found in the tombs of the Princesses, but not elsewhere in any stone construction of the five thousand years that were to run their course in as many continents, except in Greece alone.

The greater part of the south court is still unexcavated, but on the east side are portions of a small

chapel of rather baffling plan with still more of the slender, tapering, and fluted columns, and the delicately curved cornice as in the other tombs. Here also is to be found the first tomb prepared by Zoser himself, a deep shaft and subterranean tomb-chamber with its store rooms, but all of the most primitive type, both in scheme and workmanship. Very different was the final tomb down under the Pyramid where Firth discovered passages of well-cut stone and the burial chamber itself lined with blue and green glazed tiles as perfect in colour and technique as any that have been made since.

So now we confront a great mystery. Here is a high culture and a very completely developed art dating from nearly 3000 B.C. Behind is nothing of any particular significance; another apparent case of parthenogenesis. Not quite, however, for providentially enough we know the name and the years of the Pharaoh at whose word these wonders were wrought, and as well the name and fame of his architect. The portrait statue of Zoser taken from the shrine of the destroyed North Temple is in the Cairo Museum and shows what we might expect in so great a king: a massive head with a strong, imperious mouth, wide forehead, and deep-sunken eyes—like all the work of the first four dynasties, manifestly a study from life. Authority emanated from Pharaoh, but the creative art came from Imhotep.

III

Surely this is one of the most extraordinary figures in ancient history. Imhotep ("He who cometh in peace") was the first architect in the long line that has

come down for five thousand years even to the present generation. Not only was he a great architect, he was also the type of universal genius. Like Aristotle he took all knowledge for his province; like Leonardo da Vinci he strove in the fields of many arts and sciences. He was the first architect in history; he was also the first and only architect who became a god, though it must be admitted that divine honours came to him rather as a great physician than as a master of arts. As a doctor of medicine labouring through a long life for the alleviation of disease and suffering, he was idolized during his lifetime by the people who, after his death, offered sacrifices to him in the many temples that the Pharaohs built in his honour. He was a very learned astronomer, astrologer, and magician; "Chief Lector Priest" or Ritualist; a sage of vast learning and a famous scribe; finally he was Vizier or Prime Minister to his king. In this latter capacity he was general supervisor of all the executive branches of government — Judiciary, Treasury, War, Interior, Agriculture — and was entitled to the royal salutation "Life, Prosperity, Health". So great was his reputation for wisdom and integrity, the Egyptian people held that he was incapable of a wrong judgement or a wrong action.

Parenthetically, it is interesting to note the complete organization of political and civil society as it evidently was, only some three or four hundred years away from the barbarism of Neolithic sub-man. Here was a great state with an elaborate administrative system as comprehensive and as highly articulated as may be found at the present day, and as far in advance of that of Homeric Greece or the early Middle Ages or

the seventeenth century, as of that of the present day. The recent discoveries here in Egypt, in Ur of the Chaldees, in Crete of the Sea Kings, in the valley of the Indus, have revealed the baffling fact that where history begins, between 3000 and 4000 B.C., it reveals, not a slowly ascending progress from the hole-in-the-ground savagery of the New Stone Age to an ultimately achieved and perfected organism, but a completely articulated society possessed of all the requirements and minutiae of high culture, from an elaborate political organization to letters of credit and lip-sticks, bagatelles of feminine adornment and the fine arts.

Imhotep was the son of an architect, Kanofer, of whom nothing more is known. He was the progenitor of a line of master-builders, twenty-five in all, sons following in the father's footsteps for a period of some eight hundred years, and not coming to an end until the thirtieth year of King Darius the Persian. No contemporary or authentic portrait exists, but he is shown after a conventional fashion in many bas-reliefs, carrying the *was* sceptre and the *ankh*, or symbol of life, while hundreds of votive figurines have been found at the sites of the temples where he was venerated. In a sense we may regard Imhotep as, apart from kings and conquerors, the first great man in authentic history. Ultimately he was identified by the Greeks and Romans with Aesculapius, the first physician and god of medicine.

His achievements in many fields were notable, but as an architect he deserves especial honour and consideration. Unless and until the sands of Egypt yield other evidence, we must hold that the very finished

architecture of Sakkarah (and probably what was once in Memphis as well) was the creation of his own brain, unless we accept the Memphite tradition that the designs for his first work, the ancient temple at Edfu, were of heavenly origin. It is comparatively easy to see how later masters of architecture—Ictinus, Anthemius of Tralles, Eudes de Montreuil, Jaime Fabre, Palladio, Christopher Wren, Mansart, Pugin, Richardson, McKim, could have built up their great styles and given them life. Behind each lay from three thousand to five thousand years of cumulative adventure, experiment, and accomplishment, while many of the results were to be seen for the looking. But Imhotep! What had he to fall back on; to work forward from? Nothing, so far as we now know. The indigenous Neolithic tribes on which were imposed this new culture and this new art, never went further, certainly, than the megalithic dolmens that still may be found in Tunis and the Balearic Isles, as well as elsewhere in Europe as far north as Brittany and England. There was no help to be found from these. And yet here is an architecture that is of as high a grade, both in design and in technique, as that of Greece, and coming into existence two thousand five hundred years before the dawn of Hellenic art. What is the explanation?

There seem to be but three alternatives. *One*: the period covered by predynastic and Thinite civilization must have been vastly longer than the few centuries usually assigned to it, during which period the transition was effected from Neolithic sub-man to man of his full stature as he appears at the time of Zoser, and every vestige of this evolutionary process,

all traces of architecture and all artifacts have disappeared. *Two*: the culture of the first dynasties is an alien culture, imposed by conquest and occupation on an indigenous barbarism of the New Stone Age. Its provenance is wholly unknown nor is there any evidence or record that might lead to a solution of the problem, nor any known land where a culture of such excellence could have come into being, unless indeed credit is given to the legends Plato, in the *Timaeus*, credits to the Egyptian priests, of a lost Atlantis from which came all the civilization, not only of Egypt, but of all the Mediterranean peoples. If this is so, then there remains to be explained the place of sojourn of the Atlantean immigrants during the six thousand years more or less that elapsed between the last catastrophe (to adopt the chronology of the priests) and the founding by Menes of the First Dynasty. And no place offers itself for this unless it is assumed that the sands of the Sahara or of Libya hide the vestiges of great cities and great peoples that flourished there before geological phenomena turned (as they did) a once fertile land into an arid desert. *Third*: that by some sudden accentuation of the *élan vital*, man, as we know him, appeared in his full stature and competence somewhere about the year 4000 B.C.; that from Menes to Zoser — a period of no more than four centuries — he accomplished his full maturity; and that Imhotep, the model of high character and lofty, comprehensive intelligence, created by his own art, and out of nothing material in the past, the first architectural style that the world of Europe had ever known.

And all these solutions are equally and highly im-

probable, yet who shall suggest a fourth alternative? There are the visible, indisputable facts at Sakkarah, and these chiseled white stones are not to be wished away.

IV

The supreme excellence of this earliest architecture and what — in spite of evanescent recovery under Seti I and the proud magniloquence of the vast erections of Rameses II — we must consider a slow but progressive degeneration until the ignominious ending under the Ptolemies, suggests certain implications as to the uniform nature of the much heralded processes of “progressive evolution”. That in Egypt at least this course was actually reversed seems to admit of no denial. The graceful and technically perfect architecture of Imhotep is not the only evidence in this direction. Amongst the innumerable tombs and mastabas that surround the enclosure of Zoser there are many examples of the art of the earliest dynasties that prove it far superior to any that followed during the three thousand years of Egyptian history. The finest of these are the mastabas of Ti, Ptah Hotep, and Mereruka. Ti was an exalted official of the court who lived only some hundred and fifty years after Zoser and Imhotep. The sculptures here and in the other mastabas are delicate bas-reliefs of the finest workmanship and were only rivalled in later years in the time of Queen Hatshepsut at Der el Bahari, about 1480 B.C., and under Seti I at Abydos some two hundred years later. These Sakkarah sculptures are not only of the utmost perfection of technique, but they are more free and vital than any of their successors. After the Fifth

Dynasty, which ended in 2420 B.C., art became almost completely stylized and hieratic, though, as at Abydos under Seti I, it sometimes rose to high levels of abstract beauty and competence of execution. Here, however, as in all the art of the Old Kingdom, there is the utmost freshness and vitality, with no loss of artistic integrity. These intaglio reliefs are representative of all the contemporary works of man, in agriculture, building, commerce by sea and land, hunting, fishing, administration, et cetera, and all are worked out with clear-seeing realism and supreme artistry.

These qualities are invariable in the art of the first five dynasties and have hardly been matched in later times, and if so, only for the briefest periods. The finest sculpture in the round, the most noble diorite statue of Kephren, the builder of the second pyramid at Gizeh, and now in the Cairo Museum, dates from a time not more than a century and a half after the reign of Zoser and is not only the finest in Egypt but is quite worthy of comparison with Greek sculpture at its best. All the work of the time has the same living quality, the same integrity, and the same close relationship to life. The portrait heads of Queen Nefert, the "Sheik el Beled", the many versions of the "Seated Scribe", the portraits of Renofer, High Priest of the Sun, are but a few examples of this supremely high artistry. It is only necessary to spend an hour in the Room of the Ancient Empire in the Cairo Museum and then to go to any one of the later galleries, to see the difference between the living art of the earliest ages and the progressively formalistic art of succeeding centuries as the hardening process went on.

It seems to me a question of curious and stimulating

interest, this sudden appearance out of the void of a great culture, a great art, and of lofty personalities such as that of Imhotep to express this culture in original and living form.

V

If, with further and final search, no intermediate steps are found leading up to the "Palette of Namer", or from the dolmens of Neolithic times to the fully perfected architecture of Sakkarah, what shall we infer? It is only begging the question to assert that, in accordance with an assumed evolutionary process, such steps *must* have been taken and through a necessarily long period of time, but that these evidences have all been completely destroyed. Theory must adapt itself to facts, and not the reverse. All the great eras of human culture and civilization have risen suddenly in the past, though from a basis already determined and abandoned, only to descend by a steady glissade of devolution. Is it not possible that the beginning of our own era that comprehends all these successive but ephemeral waves of progress, came into being after a similar fashion, and that out of "the dust of the earth" of Neolithic man, and by the operation of a suddenly and powerfully accentuated *élan vital*, man was raised up in all the fullness of character and capacity that are the mark of his humanity?

This, of course, would leave still unsolved the mystery of the paintings and sculpture of the Caves of Altamira, the Dordogne, and similar sites where the curious art demonstrably dates from a far earlier time. What about this? It can hardly be ascribed to an earlier stage of evolution that progressed regularly un-

til it culminated in the first historic dynasties in Egypt, for some thousands of years intervened, during which Paleolithic and Neolithic sub-man resumed his sway, leaving little more than the chipped flints of savagery to record his very limited activities, which were considerably less intelligent than those of the beaver or the bee.

Let us propose "as a subject to reason about" that there have been several successive periods of human society; that, so to speak, there has been more than one "act of creation" and that the Azilian and Magdalenian art of Western Europe was the record of a progressively decadent tradition brought to the Iberian Peninsula and the western coasts of Europe by immigrants from some historically undetermined centre of an ancient and high culture. The tradition dissolved and those that had striven to perpetuate it perished, while sub-man continued his unedifying and static career.

And as for the sudden and almost "catastrophic" appearance of the dynastic culture and art of Egypt, how would this solution serve?

The immigrants (or refugees) from the unknown centre of an old culture, made their land-fall not only on the Iberian coast but also on the shores of that great inland sea that paralleled the Mediterranean and is now the Desert of Sahara. Here the colonization persisted while the other (and perhaps earlier) in the Iberian Peninsula died out. If the migration from the West was the result of catastrophe, then there may have been two or more; the last or Saharan migration being the final one which brought with it the higher type of refugee and the most persistent tradition of

civilization and culture. Around the borders of this sea the old civilization flourished until that geological disturbance which closed the entrance from the Atlantic, bringing about the inevitable and progressive drying up of the sea and its transformation into desert.

As the imprisoned water evaporated and the drifting sands encroached more and more on its shrinking area, the inhabitants were driven continually eastward until at last the desert triumphed and in a last desperate migration the remaining vestiges of a great culture descended upon the Nile delta, establishing there the First Dynasty under their leader, the Pharaoh Menes.

Some such sequence of events as this is at least possible and it would explain the mysterious appearance of a high culture, with original and highly developed art, just where and when it happened. Recently General Smuts has brought forward the idea that the Sahara was indeed the original centre of the development of *homo sapiens*. If he is right, or if it was only a transitional stage from a vastly earlier prehistoric civilization to the historic period of about 4000 B.C., then some day may be found buried in the sands of the Saharan and the Libyan Deserts the remains of a great and lost civilization.

Recently have been discovered near Fezzan rock-cut drawings from prehistoric times that are almost identical with those in the Caves of Altamira. Certainly then it would seem that the provenance might be the same.

Of course this implies the possibility of a lost Atlantis, and why not? There is nothing irrational or even impossible in such a theory as this, while it has the merit of solving in the simplest fashion the whole

problem, not alone of the origins of all Mediterranean civilization, but also the equally baffling question of the sources of the high culture of the prehistoric races of Central and South America; for according to the latest theories — which run counter to all the cherished dogmas of anthropologists and archaeologists, and are therefore indignantly rejected — they both had a common source.

A Plea to Mr. Charles A. Beard

HERBERT AGAR

MR. BEARD'S new book* is wholly remarkable, and almost wholly encouraging to those who believe in the principles and programme of THE AMERICAN REVIEW. The book proves that the American Liberal tradition, now that the crisis in thought and politics has come, need not dissolve into impotence and frustration as Liberalism has done over most of the continent of Europe. Mr. Beard, representing American Liberalism, has had the knowledge and the moral strength to define the new issues and thus to come a long way toward discovering how to meet these issues in terms of historic Americanism. It is my hope that a discussion of the points on which our policies still diverge may lead Mr. Beard, and other Liberals who are travelling his road, to a study of the Distributist plan for America.

Mr. Beard believes that America must now seek "the most efficient use of the natural resources and industrial arts of the nation at home in a quest for security and a high standard of living". A large part of his book is given to showing why this search must be carried on "at home" — why, in other words, we can no longer find in foreign trade an outlet for our "surplus" goods and services. Mr. Beard divides his argument into two parts. The first part is easy. It is an

* THE OPEN DOOR AT HOME: A Trial Philosophy of National Interest' by Charles A. Beard, with the collaboration of G. H. E. Smith. (MACMILLAN. 331 pp. \$3.00.)

explanation of why a large loan-financed foreign trade will not accord with a system of high tariffs. As Mr. Beard says:

The statement of the issue disposes of it: a continuous expansion of exports cannot be effected under the system of closely restricted imports prevailing in the United States. A temporary stimulus, in the form of lavish foreign loans, may be administered to the export business, but in the long run the balance of payments must operate, unless defaults, scaling, and repudiation intervene. . . . Those who are not convinced by the sequence of events during the years 1920-1934 are certainly beyond reach of knowledge and logic.

Mr. Beard then adds (and this is the second part of his argument, the part that lifts his book at once to high importance) that "the fact that American industry and agriculture failed to secure a continuous expansion of exports between 1920 and 1934 under the régime of export promotion and high tariffs does not lead, as some of our logicians would have us believe, to the demonstration that 'lower trade barriers', or even free trade, would guarantee that continuous expansion of exports." In discussing this point Mr. Beard shows that the classical Free Trade argument gained what little validity it had from the fact that it was thought in terms of a handicraft-world. He also stresses the fact that the brief success of the Free Trade system, as worked by Great Britain, was the result of England's being a jump ahead of the rest of the world in machine technique, and thus did not prove that Free Trade had any natural or permanent advantages.

With respect to contemporary international trade, [says Mr. Beard] the theory of natural differentiation, comparative costs, mutuality of benefit, and equality of footing—which once offered the appearances of a certain “order” or “system”—has been completely invalidated by science and heavy industry. In the world’s several national markets, the commodities of vegetable civilizations have been subordinated to the commodities of mineral civilizations, especially coal and iron civilizations. . . . With their control over heavy industries and huge capital accumulations, they practically dominate the vegetable economies of the world and hold them at their mercy under a régime of free and equal commerce. By pushing their heavy industries against the weaker and less organized vegetable economies of the world, they thrust downward their own agriculture in common with other agricultural economies, destroy the balance of mutuality, and are already well advanced on the road to the point where the disproportion of benefit reacts against them, bringing them to an impasse in their own development.

This is simple truth, and it leads to the conclusion that if the United States should manage, by force of arms, to make and keep a huge foreign market for her “surplus” production, she would merely be starting down the same short steep hill at the foot of which British economy lies dejected. Mr. Beard has described the process to perfection. He admits the possibility that we, with our present power, might make such markets for ourselves, and he then asks:

Is it *desirable* from the point of view of domestic economy and American civilization? It means, if experience is a guide, the increasing predominance of manufacturing over agriculture and the urban way of life over the

rural way of life. It means an ever larger proportion of talents concentrated on the manipulations of business as distinguished from agriculture and an ever increasing proportion of the working people transformed into urban proletarians—"asphalt flowers", as they are known in Europe—toolless, homeless, and propertyless, dependent upon the sale of bare labour power—proletarians trained, if trained at all, in narrow mechanical specialties likely to be destroyed at any time by new inventions. It means also the increasing accumulation of wealth in the hands of the directing classes, with the manners, standards, and artificialities which undermine the very qualities of courage and leadership requisite to the successful operations of those classes.

A favourite argument in favour of Free Trade is to point at the United States, claiming that our great "prosperity" ("a chicken in every garage") is explained by our being the world's largest Free Trade area. To meet this argument, Mr. Beard also points at the United States. Only he does not see us as something too beautiful for words, but as a people whose wasted opportunities make him ill.

The experience of the United States [he says] with freedom of trade over an immense area, differentiated as various nations are by climate, soil, industries, and skills, utterly explodes the contention of the so-called internationalists, dominated by low-trade-barrier predilections, that international efficiencies, comparative costs, mutual exchange through price, and supply and demand will make for equilibrium and higher standards throughout the world. American agriculture was not rising in the scale of living standards even during the years of rapid industrial expansion, 1920-1929; on the contrary, . . . it was utterly subjected to the organization, concentration,

price control, and ruthless leadership of great industries in the United States and was sinking into mortgages, debts, tenantry, and poverty while the profits of industry piled higher and higher. When at length the process of draining agriculture had proceeded far enough, even industrial capitalism was almost paralyzed, partly from lack of buying power among the American farmers supposed to enjoy at home the free-trade benefits of comparative costs, mutual exchange through price, and supply and demand. All over the United States, under the free-trade régime, there have been and now are blighted regions and industries, immense stretches of squalor and ignorance, wretched educational facilities, inadequate medical services, and an almost total dearth of the amenities of civilization.

How then could it be expected that under a system of world free trade the general level of civilization would rise, the more advanced enjoying increasing prosperity as the more backward automatically received the benefits of mutuality in exchange? If knowledge of experience means anything and is employed in place of formulas taken from the rationalization of British manufacturing interests as they stood in 1850, there is absolutely no reason for expecting such an outcome from lowering international barriers. On the contrary, there is good ground for believing that the well-organized and ruthless machine civilizations would use their power of exploiting the weaker and unorganized agricultural and raw material regions to the limit, until the latter were drained and impoverished, and the débâcle of both parties hastened.

An important doctrine of American Distributism can be deduced from this passage. Distributists claim that free trade among the American states has worked badly because the industrial East has played the part,

within our borders, that England has played in world affairs, while the South and West have played the less pleasing part of the exploited "vegetable civilizations". It is for this reason that Distributists urge that the United States needs, not only national autarchy, but a high degree of regional self-sufficiency, of regional production, within the national economy.

It is now clear why Mr. Beard comes to the refreshing conclusion that even if his plan for national autarchy should lead to a lower standard of life (which he does not admit), we had better choose his plan anyway, since there are worse things than a lower standard of life.

If a lower standard of life [he says] must result from failure to find such outlets [for our "surplus" production], then it would be the better part of wisdom to adjust ourselves immediately to that lower standard rather than to delude ourselves longer by false hopes of accomplishing the impossible. Moreover, long time security accompanied by a lower standard of life is preferable to brief periods of fitful "prosperity" followed by disruptions, unemployment, and the degrading conditions of life and labour prevailing after the crash of 1929. . . . And after all has been said for economics pure and simple, the issue of policy can be debated in terms of national ideals—the greatest possibilities of security, peace, and social order. In terms of civilization it is not the richest person who is greatest, but the one who makes the noblest and most effective use of his resources and talents.

Having disposed of the hope of building a good economy for the United States by dumping our "surplus" goods abroad, what positive plan has Mr. Beard

to offer? First, in general terms, he points out that we must learn to think of success in more complicated terms than those of mere salesmanship:

For more than three hundred years [he writes], human energies and practical thought have been concentrated with increasing force on the selling of goods at a profit, as distinguished from the production, exchange, and consumption of useful, pleasurable, and beautiful goods in ways of life and labour conducive to virtue—the kind of virtue that is absolutely indispensable to the maintenance and continuance of a strong, cohesive, and secure society.

It is the phrase, “in ways of life and labour conducive to virtue”, that makes me feel American Distributism has something to say which may interest Mr. Beard. If his whole aim were the production and consumption of the greatest number of goods, I should expect him to end as a Communist or as a Big Business oligarch. But when he adds “in ways of life and labour conducive to virtue”, I feel he is excluding himself from either of those camps. At the present, however, his programme, though looking in our direction, stops a long way short of the minimum which we think necessary.

Mr. Beard says that in order to take care of the surpluses which cannot be dumped abroad we must secure a large increase in the consuming and buying power of the American public. And he appears to agree with the New Deal in thinking this can be done by a fairer distribution of income. He accepts, apparently, the Hobson analysis of the causes of panics and depressions under capitalism. Mr. Beard puts this point as follows:

. . . that the primary element in each periodical panic is an unbalance between plant and productive capacity on the one side and consumer buying-power on the other, that the unbalance is due to the devotion of too much wealth to plant-extension and too little to consumption, and that the disproportionate allocation of wealth to plant extension is owing in the main to the concentration of ownership which places too large a share of the annual wealth produced in the hands of a small number of people who simply cannot spend it on consumption goods but must pour it back into the already overcrowded capital, or plant-extension, market.

Mr. Beard is modest about this view. He merely says that he believes it to be true, and that he believes a redistribution of income, plus national autarchy, will make it possible for us to consume much of our so-called surplus at home, thus securing a higher standard of life for the masses. (His autarchy, of course, does not exclude the exchange of American goods and services in return for foreign goods which we need for our own production or which we have come to desire as luxuries. But such reasonable foreign trade as this does nothing to solve the "surplus" problem. For the goods that come back in exchange will need just as much purchasing power to move them as the goods that went out in the first place. The right kind of foreign trade diversifies our domestic production; but it does not affect in any way the problem of how to consume that production.)

My own view is that if Mr. Beard thinks only in terms of distributing income, and does not consider the distribution of property, he will find that our financial system simply does not distribute enough

purchasing power to let us buy, at home, anything like our full potential production. The problem can probably be met by some form of consumer credits, such as are advocated in the Douglas Plan. But consumer credits, added to the present factory system and the present concentration of real ownership, will lead to a society in which most men live largely on a kind of dole from the state—not a society, as I shall suggest below, of genuinely free men, and not a society in which the “ways of life and labour” are conducive to virtue.

Mr. Beard sums up his programme as follows: “A commonwealth based upon the efficient use of national resources and talents and an efficient distribution of wealth is the only alternative to the continuance of the interest-conflict hitherto dominant, and to the acceptance of the waste, discouragement, social distress, and ruin which, tested by its fruits, flow out of that system of policy.” The important question is, What does Mr. Beard mean by “wealth”? Does he mean income, or does he mean real property? He never, I think, answers this question directly; yet it seems fair to assume, from the tenor of the whole book, that what he means is income, that the “efficient” state which he foresees is a state which produces everything the American people need, both in the realm of tangibles and intangibles, and which sees to it that the American people have enough purchasing power to avail themselves of this production. I admit, of course, that such a state would be an improvement on the present muddle. But it would not be a state of free men in the older American sense, or in the sense which makes the greatest natural appeal to

Liberals. It would be a nation of wage-earners and dole-takers; and the man on a wage or a dole has no power of resistance to the whims of his distant employer or his distant bureaucrat.

If American Liberals, such as Mr. Beard and Senator Borah, would think of wealth in terms of real property, and would plan for a wide distribution of such property, they would be planning a state in which real freedom, real equality, real political democracy, would be possible.

Mr. Beard, at least, cannot be wholly unsympathetic to such a programme. He cannot be among those who accuse us, when we urge the distribution of real property, of seeking to return to a brutally and debasingly poor economy. For he has given, in his present book, one of the most glowing accounts I have ever read of the beauties of such an economy under conditions far less favourable than those of today. In seeking to prove that America has ample resources to live richly on her own, Mr. Beard writes:

A single citation taken from the historical records of a single family may be used to illustrate, if not establish, the proposition. This family came to America in colonial times. . . . By 1830 there were many descendants. All of them were farmers and artisans and owned homesteads of fair size. With agriculture they combined the crafts of shop and household. One of the men was a hatter, another was a tanner, a third was a smith and carriage-maker, a fourth was a wood and metal worker who made spinning wheels, looms, barrels, furniture, and utensils, and a fifth was a distiller of brandy. The women of the household were equally versatile and skilled in the domestic arts—spinners, weavers, dyers, and conservers of foodstuffs; they made blankets, coverlets, sheets, rugs,

and clothing, using wool, cotton and flax, some of which, after the lapse of a century, are still in use!

Of foodstuffs this community of families produced wheat, rye, oats, and barley, chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, pork, and beef, honey and sorghum molasses, cherries, peaches, plums, apples, raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries, potatoes, cabbage, peas, lettuce, onions, rhubarb, parsnips, turnips, melons, pumpkins and squashes, pure wines and brandy. Wool, cotton, and linen supplied clothing, carpets, and bedding. Fuel came from the forests. Houses, all good and substantial, were made of brick and wood, the materials for which came from the farms. The only articles which the community required for a high standard of physical life were wrought-iron, glass, and salt, with tea and coffee as luxuries. Furniture, hats, tools and implements were made in the farm shops. The community supported an academy, housed in a building made of brick and wood supplied from forest and field and erected by community labour. . . .

The more intellectually alert among the family were acquainted with the main currents of thought then running through the Western world—religious, political, and scientific. None was rich; none was poor. No member of the community was ever uncertain as to possessing all the food, clothing, and shelter necessary for a comfortable life. All, men and women alike, were artisans, possessed of an artistic skill which found joyful expression. . . .

It is a matter of incontestable historical fact that these families had, largely as a result of their own labour without the boasted advantages of contemporary technology or foreign trade, an abundance and variety of foodstuffs far beyond the budget of the overwhelming majority of American farming and labouring families today, and they enjoyed a continuing security in econ-

omy vouchsafed to none of the one-crop farmers and industrial workers in the contemporary order of things, with its enormous technical resources. Furthermore, the material conditions which made possible this type of individual, family, and community life still exist on a huge scale in the United States.

It is fun to remember that Mr. Beard is here describing that woeful "economy of scarcity" from which we are now being rescued. But if life could be as good as this a hundred years ago in the United States, in regions that were largely self-sufficient economic units, I do not see why the Distributist plan is such a silly dream today. Our plan involves encouraging a large degree of regional self-sufficiency, encouraging the small productive unit, so that land and tools and shops and little factories can be owned by the men who work them. But our plan does not involve discouraging the maximum use of modern machinery, so long as that use does not require the inhuman relationships of the present factory system. Our plan does not even exclude the giant factory in a few fields of production — in certain electrification projects, for instance — since we do not seek an absolute uniformity in our economy, but rather a rich variety, in which the *determining* form shall be the small and independent unit. And we submit to Mr. Beard and his fellow Liberals that our plan makes for "the production, exchange, and consumption of useful, pleasurable, and beautiful goods in ways of life and labour conducive to virtue".

Our plan calls for three basic assumptions — none of which, it seems to me, are rejected by Mr. Beard. The first assumption is that we must turn our backs

on the foreign-trade madness, which is tied up with exploitation and the concentration of ownership. In this Mr. Beard is wholly with us. The second assumption is that we believe in the life on the land as a good-in-itself, and not merely as something to be kept alive, or half-alive, so that we may have enough to eat if we get into war. In this, too, Mr. Beard appears to be with us, if I read correctly the implications of his book. And the third assumption is that in order to create a nation of free men we must think of distribution in terms of property and not merely of income. I do not feel that Mr. Beard can be wholly in opposition, even here, or he would not have painted so charmingly the fruits of a real property-system in a world which lacked many of the advantages that such a system could enjoy today.

One last point: Mr. Beard is clearly averse to the various political tyrannies that are appearing in the modern world. He clearly has the feelings of the true American Liberal about self-government. I suggest to him that self-government is only possible in a state where real property is widely distributed. Long ago James Madison warned us that men without real property, if they possessed the vote, would become "the tools of opulence and ambition". I suggest that this is a good phrase to describe the expropriated voters in a modern American city. We can preserve the expropriation, and the "efficiency" which is said to go with it; but in that case we must get rid of the democracy, as has been done in Russia and in many parts of Europe. Or we can create a real system of private property, and with it a system of self-government that is not a lie.

Regionalism and Education

DONALD DAVIDSON

TWENTY years ago the textbook for a course in Freshman composition was entitled, quite modestly, *Specimens of Prose Composition*. The selections were sober classics to be imitated. Nobody thought of them as intended to answer the riddles of the universe. The student was expected to improve his English, and nobody raised the question of whether he ought, in process, to achieve "the beginnings of a social perspective and a social philosophy".

Nowadays all is changed. The phrase I have just quoted, from an able and, I dare say, a popular book of essays for Freshmen, indicates the responsibility that the composition teacher must undertake. It indicates, also, a new and powerful tendency in education of which the conditions in the Freshman English course furnish only a single example. The Freshman must not only abhor the dangling participle; he must also be led to establish "desirable cultural attitudes" and to understand "this astonishing world of the present decade". Instead of the old books of specimens, we have books that bristle with topicality and controversy. *Opinions and Attitudes*, *Essays Toward Truth*, *Challengings Essays* are some of the popular titles. For their contents they draw heavily upon current magazines, and books that happen to be talked about. The book of models has become, in short, almost a magazine — a kind of *Freshman Reader's Digest* published every two or three years. At least one publisher

has been enterprising enough to issue an "Essay Annual" which makes an entirely fresh garner each year. Besides being contemporaneous, the contents are provocative and ambitious in the highest degree. Not many collectors are so ambitious as the editor of one new text, who proposes, he says in his introductory note, to "set forth significant points of view in various fields of thinking—educational, philosophical, aesthetic, moral and religious, political, national and international, economic and social". But in almost any text the student is likely to encounter articles on "What's Wrong with the United States", "Is Progress a Delusion?", or "The Good Communist".

All this means that the Freshman composition course is rapidly being turned into an orientation course. The students are to be provoked into writing by being provoked into thinking; and if they are going to think, they might as well be taught what to think about a great number of problems. This may seem to be a heavy load to impose on the average composition instructor, who, often as not, is a teaching fellow, at the moment engaged in a quest for a Ph.D. degree, and therefore is not necessarily in a position to cultivate a wise and philosophical outlook on world problems. Besides, how can he cultivate "desirable cultural attitudes" toward a variety of profound questions in a class that is baffled by the spelling of the word *separate* or the mild iniquities of the comma splice?

Yet I am not rebellious against the new tendency. It is certainly flattering to the vanity of those of us who see in the English teacher the latest defender of the humanistic culture that is threatened with destruction by the great invasion of scientific and utilitarian sub-

jects. If the other departments are going to abdicate their cultural responsibility, there is no reason why the English teacher should not boldly assume that responsibility. Give us a point of reference, the English teachers might say, and we will map out an orientation that will determine the culture of our generation.

The trouble lies, however, in finding the point of reference. Modern thought is notoriously abstract. We are aware, as never before, that the world is full of knowledge; but never before was it so difficult to apply knowledge to the concrete and specifically human needs.

Labouring under this disability, perhaps, the makers of our orientation texts are tending to treat American culture as a very abstract phenomenon. The orientation that they propose must take place, apparently, in a social vacuum; or at least in a society which by no means is completely realized in all parts of the United States. Like many of our progressive educators, they are much concerned about *what* to teach and *how* to teach it; they rarely ask *whom* they are teaching, and *where*. I suppose that they have been under the delusion, from which few of us have wholly escaped, that the standards of liberal education require the teacher to cultivate the planetary consciousness of Mr. H. G. Wells. They have been busy with a "world approach", or else with something that they mistakenly believe to be a national approach. In this fit of large-mindedness they have forgotten that it makes a difference whether you are teaching a scion of the cloak-and-suit trade in an eastern metropolis; or a son of a plantation-owner or small farmer in the cotton-growing South; or the daughter of a Scandinavian immi-

grant in the corn and wheat belt of the West. But in spite of the obvious and admitted fact that education, like art, has aspects that are independent of geography and local tradition, I should maintain that it does make a difference. For a consideration of American culture, the point of reference from which to begin orientation is obviously provided by the American situation. It is in the differences that historians and sociologists unite in describing as regional differences.

Although regionalism is sometimes called a theory, and sometimes a literary movement, it could better be taken as the new name for a process of differentiation within geographic limits that is as old as the American republic and perhaps was predestined in the settlement of our continental area. The regionalists are those who wish to see the cultural differences respected, and not thwarted or obliterated. No matter from what field they draw their data — whether historical, scientific, or artistic — the regionalists agree that America, far from being perfectly homogeneous and standardized, is amazingly heterogeneous and diverse. They do not, of course, agree as to the exact outlines of the regional map. But in general they hold that New England, the metropolitan East, the South, and the Middle West, are well-developed and self-conscious regions that have already attained a high degree of differentiation; and that the younger regions of the Southwest, the Northwest, and the Pacific Coast are building up regional traditions as clearly marked as in the older parts of the country.

It is therefore dangerous to talk glibly about American education or American culture, as if there were no regional differences. The person who generalizes thus

freely, on the assumption that some quite uniform national tradition is floating in the air and can be apprehended and applied as the pure American thing, is sure to be met, sooner or later, with the assertion, "That won't do in the South," or "We don't do things that way in the East." Sometimes the challenge is crude and direct, and then we have such violent phenomena as anti-evolution laws. More often the rebellion is so passive and gradual that we hardly realize that it is taking place. But presently it is discovered that education is having no effect; it is being dissipated in an indifferent or quietly hostile atmosphere. Such resistance, far less spectacular but more general than anti-evolution laws, is a hidden factor in much of our educational confusion today.

The principles of regionalism supply an element of realism which has been lacking in the diagnosis of our educational leaders. While we must grant that the body of educational knowledge is, or ought to be, universal rather than parochial and narrow, we must also acknowledge, if we be honest and realistic, that there is no central authority with power to decide, for the United States at large, what is universal and what is narrow. But it is in our educational and intellectual bill of rights that any section or region or state or city has the full liberty of making that critical decision on its own responsibility.

Nevertheless, students of regionalism well know that such a central authority has often been assumed or aspired to by a process familiar in American history. Whenever a given region, East, South, or West, has at stake some profound regional interest, it is very likely to present its peculiar regional interest in the

light of a national interest, and to argue for its general acceptance.

Let us be plain about the matter. In education, it now happens to be the metropolitan East, and especially metropolitan New York, which is offering its ideas in the disguise of national ideas, and so is tending to assume a central authority that does not properly belong to it. The ideas of New York and its metropolitan province may of course have great excellence for the region where they are generated. But they do not necessarily and invariably confer a benefit upon other regions. In fact, the dissemination of these ideas, through the channels which New York possesses and other regions lack, may sometimes be resented as a hostile invasion, and may indeed often be an actual subversion of good and fruitful regional patterns that ought to be preserved and not destroyed. We would not desire a conquest by New York so complete as to impoverish the national life by robbing it of diversity; or a retaliation from some regional quarter so fierce as to introduce disorder and irritation.

On the contrary, a good regional theory of education would call for our institutions to exercise a dual function. In so far as they can introduce the student to a body of learning that is clearly universal and timeless, they must necessarily abstract the student to some extent from his regional background. At the same time, it would be a mistake to try to make the complete Southerner over into the complete New Yorker, or vice versa. An education cannot divorce itself wholly from its background. It has a clear duty to make its learning or its technique adaptable to the background where it is expected to function. Besides,

the institution ought to draw something from the life of its own region and so make its unique and independent contribution to the general, or national, tradition. To emphasize the abstracting function unduly will lead to servility — to an aggregation of satellites revolving humbly around the master orb. But an exaggeration of the purely local would be just as undesirable; it would lead to provincialism or sectionalism in the bad sense. Ideally, we should desire an easy give and take, out of which would grow a rough composite, a national tradition including the regional traditions and having no existence apart from them. This national American tradition might be a little vague and hard to define, like the European tradition; but it would not present the false and vicious simplification under which we wince when a Frenchman or an Englishman fails to appreciate the rich complexity of American traditions.

It is clear that we are in more danger, at the moment, of taking up a false nationalism than of dropping into the opposite error of sterile provincialism. For the metropolitan idea is well advertised, and the regional idea poorly advertised.

In the new kind of Freshman composition texts, for example, it is clear that the editors do not carry out their announced purpose of orienting the student. He is introduced, to be sure, to a certain range of "conflicting opinions and attitudes". But in the books I have examined, there is far less conflict of opinion than the editors claim. With a unanimity that is striking, our anthologists have favoured selections that represent, on the whole, the range of opinion in the metropolitan East alone. They apparently propose to

orient the Freshman by giving him as large a dose of metropolitanism as they can get between the covers of a book. They thrust him into contact with the minds of the professional contributors to New York magazines: the men and women who have outdone all previous metropolitan generations in their studied disregard for the country west and south of the Hudson River.

Who these people are, every teacher of Freshman English knows. The average book of "provocative" models is almost certain to contain the inevitable essay on the machine age by Stuart Chase; a bit of socialistic economics from Henry Pratt Fairchild; one of Will Durant's lectures for women's clubs; a few pleasantries by H. L. Mencken; an article on American architecture by Lewis Mumford; a slice of autobiography by Ludwig Lewisohn; an article on religion by John Haynes Holmes or Harry Emerson Fosdick; something about politics or scholarship from Walter Lippmann; and a few literary teasers by Heywood Broun, Henry Hazlitt, or Joseph Wood Krutch.

It is not the inclusion of such writers that I object to. As a teacher of Freshman English, I envy the intellectual attainments of Freshman classes in those fortunate institutions where, without disturbance or bewilderment, the Jew, the Catholic, the Methodist, and the Baptist can receive their common lessons in religion from Lewis Browne, Herbert Asbury, and Harry Emerson Fosdick, to say nothing of Dean Inge and Bertrand Russell. I do not hold that the Freshman should be insulated from contact with such minds; but I find it exceedingly strange that he should be allowed to discover these, the favourites of the metropolis, and

no other minds. It cannot be a very sound orientation which subjects the Freshman to only one kind of stimulating ideas. We cannot all live in New York, or in a place that is like New York. It is an odd way to begin an education, if the student is to be encouraged to put aside at once, as unworthy of appreciative loyalty, the ideas of the region where he will have to live, and to take on, no matter what his environment, the habits of the big-city mind.

Yet if the Freshman must accept the evidence of his book of models, he is driven, however reluctantly, in that direction. Of the life of the great outlying regions, the books give almost no hint. This state of affairs is surprising, when we recall how greatly American literature and social criticism have been enriched in recent years by the growth of strong regional movements in the South and West, led by alert and productive writers, who are fully represented in the current anthologies of poetry, drama, or short stories. But these writers are not to be found in the Freshman orientation texts. André Siegfried or Bertrand Russell may possibly be called in to make pronouncement on Fundamentalism in the South, but not John Donald Wade of Georgia or John Crowe Ransom of Tennessee, who can tell that story from the inside. The New York critics are invited to deliver their gloomy harangues on literature and art, but Vernon Louis Parrington of the Northwest is nowhere to be discovered. We may get something on politics from Harold Laski or Walter Lippmann, but nothing whatever from the great group of regional historians and biographers who have rebuilt, in bold and lively terms, the image of the diverse American tradition that our iconoclasts

have been engaged in repudiating: nothing, that is to say, from Beveridge, Dodd, Bowers, Phillips, Owsley, Milton, Winston, Johnson, Eckenrode, Tate, Lytle, and a host of other able writers. The historians, in fact, have suffered from as great a neglect as the creative writers; but the regionalists who have made it their particular business to explore the traditions of South and West are given no consideration at all.

In the world of print the ascendancy of New York is so much taken for granted that I am sure the editors of these texts were not conscious of yielding to a bias when they chose their selections. They have only followed the New York magazines where these have led, without realizing that most of the New York magazines are hardly any longer national magazines, but are tending to become sectional and propagandist organs. But the bias is there, and it is too remarkable to go unrecorded.

For example, in one new text I find 31 American authors included. Of these 20 were born in the East; 10 in the Middle West; 1 in the South; none in the Far West. Of the 20 Easterners, all have remained in their native region, and nearly all are now in New York City. Of the 10 Middle Westerners, 5 are now identified with New York colleges or periodicals, and 2 are elsewhere in the East. The lone Southern-born man, Mr. Abraham Flexner, also has long since moved to New York. If these regional immigrants may be counted as metropolitan converts, as in all probability they should be, we then have a total of 28 Easterners to 3 non-Easterners. The book is practically an all-Eastern text. The only reference to regional culture that I find in it is contained in an essay by Will Durant,

and is as follows: "Why is it that, broadly speaking, tolerance and freedom of the mind flourish more easily in the North than in the South?"

This is an extreme example, of course. The preponderance of Easterners over non-Easterners is hardly ever as great as 9 to 1 in other textbooks. It is more likely to be 5 to 1 or 4 to 1. It is sure to be as much as 3 to 1. What would be a just proportion, I do not know. Merely to count noses is a deceptive and probably a meaningless kind of analysis. I cite the figures only to dramatize in a rather bald way a tendency that seems worth noting. It would be fairer to rest the case on subject-matter alone. By and large, I think I am safe in claiming that the overwhelming majority of the contributors, regardless of their place of origin or residence, and regardless, too, of the intrinsic merit of their contributions (which I do not here question), represent America of the Eastern metropolis rather than America of the Western and Southern hinterland. If the editors of the orientation texts are to be as impartial as they invariably protest themselves to be, it is time to alter this bias and to show some regard for the agrarian culture of the South, the town culture of upper New England, the mixed culture of the Middle West, and the culture of the plains, the mountains, or the coast of other regions.

Among the new texts I have looked into, only one, a collection entitled *These United States*, and edited by Professors Jones, Huse, and Eagleson of California, makes any attempt to suggest the regional diversity of America. The opening essay, by William B. Munro, is a persuasive exposition of the views held by contemporary regionalists as to the mixed and pluralistic

tendencies of American life. In the national motto, *E pluribus unum*, Professor Munro argues that "the accent is on the *pluribus*". But the ensuing essays hardly carry out this theme. The contributors are largely the old familiar crowd of defeated artists and newspaper colyumists.

Yet it is something to have even a beginning. I should like to think that the appearance of one book is a sign that others are on the way. Out of regard for the sanity of teachers and the self-respect of students, if not for the good of the Republic, some person or persons ought to break through the conventional pattern and give us texts with a little more life and diversity in them than is afforded by these cullings from last year's New York magazines. And surely, if we are to have an orientation course, dealing frankly with issues contemporary and historical, it is impossible to keep the regional text out of the reckoning.

One can visualize two kinds of texts in which the regional approach might be used. There might be a general text which would balance the metropolitan contingent with selections chosen to represent various types of regional culture and points of view. The purpose of such a text would be American and catholic: it would give any American student, whether in Manhattan or Gopher Prairie, some faint notion of the *pluribus* that ought to be associated with the true American *unum*.

But there ought to be another, more specialized kind of text, regional and not general. It would not replace the general text or the non-contemporary collections favoured in some quarters, but it would be supplementary, or complementary. Such a book would be, quite

frankly, a volume of regional selections intended to bring into lively focus the tradition of a particular region. Each region, of course, would have its own regional texts; and the publishers, though they might lose something in volume of sales, might eventually operate on a less speculative basis — at least they would not be so deeply committed, as now, to the risky and dubious business of attempting to palm off Dartmouth on Alabama. The material of the texts could come from writers old and new; but if only contemporary material should be desired, it is certain that there is no lack of it in any specific region. It can be found in books, or in regional magazines, or even in some of the metropolitan magazines into which regional material sometimes strays.

If the job is not taken in hand, it is likely that we shall sooner or later encounter the problem which has often troubled the peace of history teachers in Southern high schools and colleges. In the years after the Civil War, the most famous and scholarly history texts were published in the North. Too often they gave an account of the War which was not acceptable either to the Southern teacher or his clientele. The alternative, however, was too often a text which gave an orthodox Southern interpretation, but might be unscholarly or hasty — possibly it would be an inferior book that had been lobbied into acceptance on sheer patriotic grounds. That situation has now been relieved by the availability of good Southern histories and fair Northern ones. But it would be better not to have to face such a dilemma in the field of English.

We can escape it by recognizing regionalism as a natural function of our body politic. If it is good

pedagogy to proceed from the familiar to the strange, the regional text has its place, and the more so as the writing course proposes to guide the student toward some more stable and gracious conception of civilization than now prevails. Perhaps it is desirable for the Georgia freshman eventually to know something about modern physics or the scepticism of Bertrand Russell; but it is no paradox to argue that his critical approach to such subjects will not be hampered, and may be improved, if he is first allowed to get some respect and understanding for the plantation culture of which he is a part. We need to halt the uprooting process in modern education and to give our students the sense of belonging somewhere and being somebody that modern thought in the abstract seems incapable of providing. The regional text will also harmonize with the new and reasonable tendency to break through the strict barriers of course-subjects; and the Freshman English course will join hands with the courses in history or political science. Sophistication will come soon enough, anyway; and often enough too cheaply, too superficially. The regional text ought to carry the most difficult lesson that moderns have to learn: that the kingdom of God is within you, or at least around you, and is not a far-off dazzle of towers that may not, after all, really exist.

The advent of regionalism in the Freshman work is only one example of its penetration into English departments, or, for that matter, into all college activities that touch the foundations and tendencies of American life. Since the publication of Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* and similar works, it is no longer possible for the subject of American litera-

ture, whether in graduate or undergraduate courses, to be treated as an Eastern product, a little diluted by barbarian infusions from South and West. The new tendency is to view American literature as the expression of regional cultures which blend into the composite national culture. In undergraduate courses this means that a form of regionalism is actually being taught as a basic condition for understanding our literary past and present. In the graduate work it leads to studies of the regional material near at hand, whether it be the collection of ballads, the study of a cultural pattern, or the biography of a regional figure. By this process the graduate student and his professor find themselves in the surprising new rôle of interpreters of a region and conservers of a regional tradition.

From this rôle it is an easy step to the rôle of regional spokesman. Into many English departments there has recently come a new type of professor, who is a creative writer or critic, and may be the author of a novel or of a topical essay as often as a contributor to PMLA. Such professors, and with them, the eminent and non-academic poets or dramatists whom universities are beginning to call into residence, tend often to become outspoken regionalists, who gather students of similar minds around them and become in time the nucleus for active regional groups. They publish magazines and anthologies, they write and direct plays and manage theatres, they edit book-review pages. Sometimes the magazines are ephemeral; but the substantial success of *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Southwest Review*, *The Midlander*, *The Sewanee Review*, *The Frontier*, and various others augurs well for the future of the magazine that originates in the lit-

erary interest of an English department working in a particular region.

Behind such unmistakable expressions of the regional trend of English departments lies the more general tendency of the colleges and universities to adapt themselves anew to their regional environment. The sociologist is to be found adventuring in the slums, the court-rooms, the farm lands, of his contiguous territory. The economist is going about the market-place. The historian, the political scientist, the geologist, the professor of medicine, the engineer — all are now being expected to share in and guide the community life. This new activity, which has its national as well as its regional outlet, may offer a little solid comfort to those who have feared the prospect of regimentation. Regionalism is definitely a counter-tendency to that threat to liberal education. If it gains strength, we shall have no more of those missionary institutions which conceive that their duty to American civilization consists in the uncritical and servile transmission of the standards of a supposedly cultured region to a supposedly uncultured and barren one. We have had enough of this one-way traffic of educational and social ideas. We need a two-way system, which allows ideas not only to come in but to go out. A right principle of cultural diffusion would hold that our colleges ought to become true cultural centres, receiving at least as much cultural vitality from their envioning regions as from more distant ones. For such centres, regional but not in any sense parochial, the region becomes laboratory, audience, and judge. Their educational direction may be toward the universal, but toward a universal that is wrapped up with a particular way of life.

The Jettisoning of Adam Smith

ARTHUR J. PENTY

WHEN some fifty years ago the reputation of Adam Smith began to suffer as a result of the criticism of Ruskin and Socialists, the late Lord Haldane wrote a book to whitewash him. Although in *The Wealth of Nations* Smith many times insists that in pursuing his own interest the individual promotes that of society, Haldane urged that Smith was not a teacher but an observer writing about the mercantile world in which he lived, and that while he recognized in the desire for wealth the most powerful of all motives he did not exalt it into the foundation on which his system is based. No doubt this special pleading served its purpose at the time. It enabled the economists to come to terms with the new thought without repudiating the old. Nowadays, however, this compromise is breaking down. The economists are finding themselves in an impossible position. They find that though they are supposed to be the guardians of economic wisdom, the tradition of thought to which they are committed does not throw a particle of light on the economic deadlock that has overtaken society, and, in consequence, they are not unnaturally anxious to throw it overboard. But it is not as easy as it might appear, or at any rate it is not easy to do it in a way that will not bring discredit on themselves. For to throw overboard Adam Smith is to jettison one who for long has been revered as the Father of Political

Economy, and this is a very delicate task, to be done with circumspection.

This would appear to be the motive of Mr. Ginzberg's *The House of Adam Smith*.^{*} In this volume Adam Smith is not presented either as the apologist of a vicious system already in existence, which in the deepest sense is true, for he was the apologist of capitalism; nor as the formulator of a revolutionary theory of economics, which divorced economics from morals in the same way that Machiavelli divorced politics from morals; which is also true. The Adam Smith that Mr. Ginzberg portrays is one who is primarily interested in improving society by strengthening the weaker class, and who wrote to improve the lot of farmers and labourers in the eighteenth century. That may be true, yet I cannot help observing that Adam Smith, like other economists of his time, sought to recommend his proposals by insisting that they would operate to raise the rents of land and property. Perhaps the economists were wise in their generation. All power in those days was in the hands of landlords and capitalists, and as the one thing in which both presumably would be interested would be higher rents the only way of getting anything done was to persuade them that the measures advocated would have that result.

However there is no need to quibble about this. It is possible that Adam Smith was inspired by motives as worthy as say those of Machiavelli with whom he invites comparison. Adam Smith assumed that self-interest is a principle to which the regulation of society

^{*} THE HOUSE OF ADAM SMITH by Eli Ginzberg (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS. 265 pp. \$2.75).

can be safely entrusted, since the self-regarding instincts of men would, if given free play, so balance and neutralize each other as to eventuate in an equilibrium of good. It was because he believed in the possibility of such an equilibrium that he came to demand the abolition of all monopolies and all restriction upon trade, in the interests of Free Trade, which it is interesting to observe in his day was understood to mean not only all we understand by a policy of free imports but all we mean by economic individualism and *laissez-faire*; for all regulations affecting internal trade were to be deprecated as much as tariffs. This belief made him unsparing in his criticism of the Mercantile System, which incidentally he never understood, for he lumps together as one system institutions with different origins and different aims, some of which are defensible while others are not. Yet we can scarcely blame Adam Smith for this, for our capacity to discriminate carefully between them is dependent upon our knowledge of economic history, which was at his time an unexplored subject. Modern historical research has revolutionized many economic beliefs, but though undertaken by the universities themselves it has never strange to say revolutionized their teaching.

Adam Smith was misled by appearances. His great error was his assumption that the depressed and servile condition of labour in his day was a result of the subjection of trade and labour conditions to regulation. It is true as he insists that one of the reasons for low wages was that magistrates who were empowered to fix them deliberately kept them low in order that labourers could be made more industrious. But though this power was given to magistrates by the Elizabethan

Statute of Apprentices it does not follow that that Statute is the final source of the evil any more than that the Elizabethan Poor Law is to be blamed for many other social evils. Indeed, so far from this being the case, both measures were much more of the nature of effects than causes. They were both in their origin honest attempts to deal with the economic confusion of the sixteenth century consequent upon the suppression of the monasteries and the decline of the guilds.

Mr. Ginzberg makes no mention of the suppression of the monasteries. Yet their suppression exercised a decisive influence upon English economic history and was mainly responsible for the economic confusion in Adam Smith's time. In addition to their religious functions the monasteries carried on many auxiliary activities that were no part of their original purpose. Not only were they educational and charitable institutions, but they were accustomed to maintain highways and dykes, to build bridges and sea-walls and do other such work for the commonwealth. Many arts had been brought to a high state of perfection in the monasteries. Sculpture, embroidery, clock-making, and bell-founding were almost entirely monastic arts. The monks who had been the chroniclers and transcribers of manuscripts in the Middle Ages were among the first to set up printing presses.

Moreover the monasteries had come to own about a fifth of the land in the country. In consequence their violent suppression by Henry VIII disorganized the social and economic life of society. It upset the political and economic equilibrium leaving a gap in the social organism which reformers ever since have attempted in vain to fill. Their suppression deprived the

poor at one blow of alms, shelter, and schooling. It left great numbers entirely destitute of the means of existence who took to thieving and begging. Henry VIII is said to have put 72,000 thieves to death. Elizabeth complained bitterly that she could not get the laws enforced against them and she resorted, particularly in London and its neighbours, to martial law. But it was all useless. Public sympathy was with the thieves and beggars who had been rendered destitute. Since for that reason, if for no other, extermination was impracticable, the only way of meeting the problem was to make some general, permanent provision for those without the means of subsistence. Hence the Elizabethan Poor Law.

Now when the monasteries were suppressed their lands were confiscated by the Crown. But Henry was not able to keep them. He soon found out that he would only be allowed to proceed with their suppression on condition that he shared the plunder with the politicians. And so there came into existence an aristocracy whose fortunes were built upon land stolen from the Church, and henceforth they never lost a chance of blackening the Roman Church. Cobbett saw this a hundred years ago, and he deals with it in his *History of the Reformation*. He saw that a class that had inherited land stolen from the Church had a vested interest in this misrepresentation. Cobbett's *History* was burnt by the public hangman, as was the custom of the time. It was burnt because it was something more than a history — because it exposed a conspiracy.

Now all this has a very direct bearing on the subject we are discussing. The Middle Ages are involved in misrepresentation of the Roman Church, and as a

consequence the prejudice artificially created by interested persons against the Roman Church has been transferred to the social traditions of the Middle Ages and this in turn makes it exceedingly difficult to secure recognition for economic truth about the period. As a result economic history as popularly understood rests on a false foundation, and being on a false foundation everything gets distorted, and this stands in the way of our understanding the problem of the present day. I am not a Roman Catholic but say these things as an economist whose experience teaches him that religious prejudice is at the root of a great deal of economic confusion.

No one with an understanding of mediaeval economics who reads Mr. Ginzberg's book can doubt the truth of this. Mr. Ginzberg can't see Adam Smith in his proper perspective because he can't be just to the Middle Ages, and he can't be just to the Middle Ages because of his antipathy to the Roman Church. I was conscious of this all the time I was reading the book, but it was not until I reached the last chapter that I fully appreciated its intensity and irrationality, for the way a discussion on economics turns into one on natural law and from natural law turns to birth control and abortion and the Pope's encyclical on marriage and divorce suggests that the author has a complex where the Church is concerned. At the best he appears to regard it as an engine of exploitation that maintains its power by the promotion of superstition. It never seems to occur to him that there is anything to be said on the other side.

"The leaders of the Mediaeval Church", he says, "despised wealth, for they could not achieve it." A

man who could write that will never understand the Middle Ages; nay I will go further and say he will never understand anything, for he will pick up everything by the wrong end. He will not even understand Adam Smith, who would have agreed with him, because to understand Adam Smith it is necessary to relate him to his background which is not to be understood apart from an understanding of the Middle Ages. Viewed in relation to the Middle Ages, Adam Smith appears less as an innovator than as a man who carried a vicious principle to its logical conclusion. He attacked the system of Protection in the interests of economic individualism because he identified economic individualism with individual well-being. Yet had he been acquainted with mediaeval economics he would have known that, so far from economic individualism promoting the interests of the farmer and labourer, it was just the reverse, for under such conditions the only men who finally prosper are the merchant and the banker. The farmer suffers because he finds himself at the mercy of fluctuating prices, while the labourer finds himself pressed down by the superior economic power of those who employ him.

No, to have improved the position of the farmer and labourer Adam Smith should not have demanded the abolition of all status and privileges, but status and privileges for all. This would have meant a return to the Guild principle of the Middle Ages. That it never occurred to him to look in this direction for a solution of the economic problems of his age is to be connected with the fact that he never knew why the Guilds had been organized; for as I have already said economic history had yet to be explored. On the contrary, all

he knew was that there were privileged bodies called Guilds in Glasgow who were empowered to prevent Watt setting up in business there as a mathematical instrument maker. He did not know that these Guilds were the degenerate survivals of bodies that once had responsibilities as well as privileges. What is more he did not know that the reason for the degeneracy of the Guilds was not to be found in the fact that they were monopolistic bodies, but because their monopolies were not co-extensive with society, for if in the Middle Ages the Guilds had been co-extensive with society prices would have been fixed everywhere and capitalism would not have come into existence in rural areas, and if that had been the case the Guilds would have continued to exercise their functions to this day. But the rise of capitalist industry in rural areas undermined the position of the Guilds, entirely changing their character.

There can be little doubt that the later regulations of the Guilds which were regarded as tyrannical and which we hear about in the fourteenth century owed their existence to the increasing competition of this unregulated rural industry and the desire of the masters to protect their position against it. At an earlier date it had been possible for every journeyman in the Guilds to look forward to a day when he would be able to set up in business on his own account as a master. But when in the fourteenth century the masters began to find the market for their work declining as a result of the competition of rural capitalist industry they began to frame regulations, not with an eye to the interests of the Crafts as a whole which at an earlier date they had done, and which in the new

circumstances was beyond their power, but solely to protect their own individual interests.

Such undoubtedly was the origin of the grievances of the journeymen for which they obtained redress in 1336 whereby, on becoming apprentices, they were made to swear upon oath not to set up in business in the towns without the consent and licence of the masters, warders, and fellowship of their Guild, upon pain of forfeiting their freedom and like penalty. A further consequence of this competition of rural capitalist industry was that the Guilds found it increasingly difficult to maintain fixed prices, until at last, in the sixteenth century, the whole system broke down amid the economic chaos that followed the suppression of the monasteries and the wholesale importation of gold from South America which doubled prices all over Europe. The Statute of Apprentices was an attempt to save something from the wreck of mediaeval civilization.

Mr. Ginzberg is concerned to understand the reason for the survival of Adam Smith. "The economic system of the eighteenth century", he says, "has all but disappeared, and one would therefore expect to find the economic theories and fancies of that period only in a museum. One is therefore startled to learn that a treatise on economics written before the invention of steamboats, railways, and automobiles is still in vogue long after these mechanical improvements have become commonplace." Mr. Ginzberg is rightly surprised, though for the wrong reason. The real reason for being surprised at the survival of Adam Smith is not just because he wrote before the age of steamboats, but because what he said was never at any time

true. A thing that is true is true for all time and the coming of steamboats makes no difference; they could not render a true idea obsolete, but incomplete.

Now we can answer the question, Why has Adam Smith survived? The answer is in the first place that he was canonized by the universities as the Father of Political Economy, and in the next that the teaching of his theories was to all intents and purposes endowed. Until the middle of last century there were no chairs of economics at our universities; economics being previously taught as a part of jurisprudence. But when these chairs were established Adam Smith, the classical economists, Free Trade, and the Gold Standard were in the ascendant, and were accepted as the basis of university teaching on economics. And once any philosophy, subject, or theory receives such official recognition it is for practical purposes above and beyond criticism, and it reproduces itself automatically each generation. Ideas which are not officially recognized have to fight for their existence and disappear when they are disproved by arguments or events. But it is different with ideas officially endorsed by educational authorities. They become so strongly entrenched and fortified that only an earthquake can shift them.

But the earthquake today is a *fait accompli* and if my suspicion, that the universities today are anxious to jettison Adam Smith, is well founded I should like to conclude on a note of warning. There is no purpose in their throwing overboard Adam Smith unless they are prepared to take their stand on mediaeval economics which is the exact antithesis of everything Adam Smith stands for. Once they have thrown overboard

Adam Smith, they must either go back to the Middle Ages or forward to Bolshevism for which Mr. Ginzberg is not without sympathy, though I imagine he would be more surprised if he went to live in Russia today than if he were transported to the Middle Ages. It is said that the London School of Economics—with which I have heard Columbia University compared—turns out hard-boiled Liberals and Bolsheviks and nothing else. There is reason in this. Bolshevism is finally the only possible reaction against Liberalism for people who reject the Middle Ages.

Some Modern Poets and the Gentle Reader

RICHMOND CROOM BEATTY

THE dilemma of the present intelligent reader of modern poetry may be stated in this way: He labours under the compulsion of deciding either that he doesn't know what poetry is, in spite of the rich enjoyment it has given him since childhood, or that in honesty he must repudiate as unintelligible a large fraction of what our important critics are calling the finest verse now being written in English.

His dilemma, moreover, is reasonable. For he was probably educated to appreciate such writers as Shakespeare and Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, and Byron. He was taught certain definite things about poets: he was taught, notably, that they have a delightfully rhythmic and felicitous way of phrasing things; he learned to quote them, and these quotations give him pleasure. He was taught, again — and his own experience with literature bore out the teaching — that what a poet actually says in his verse is usually important and, important or not, uniformly evident. And this point of view he found abetted by his instructors, who cited with complacent approval such judgements as Tennyson passed on Browning's *Sordello*, when he remarked that there were only two statements in the poem which were comprehensible, and that they were both lies. The general reader, in brief, came naturally to look for three rather obvious and satisfying items in poetry: for pleasing rhythms, for happy phrases, and

— most basic of all — for a meaningful content, emotionally expressed.

This reader, still further, has discovered among the poets of his own day a practice which by no means repudiates his preconceptions. He has found that Edwin Arlington Robinson makes sense, though at times that sense is tortured and psychological. He has found that Edna Millay makes sense, says much that is true and moving about life, and that she also, like his distinguished favourites of past centuries, has phrases and even stanzas which he naturally sets about memorizing. And the same thing goes for Masfield, and Frost, and Housman, and for many others.

Yet the same thing emphatically does not go for T. S. Eliot always, or for Ezra Pound always, or for Allen Tate, or for the late and undeniably gifted Hart Crane. In them he finds nearly all of his conceptions about the nature of poetry treated with violence. Their rhythms are uneven, at times not even apparent, to an ear schooled in the more plaintive melody of Tennyson, and their language lacks, except rarely, what he has come to call beauty; and, finally, their content manages frequently to evade him. What do these poets mean, he asks his friends, and usually he asks to no purpose.

His next recourse is to turn to the critics known to be interested in these gentlemen, and to the prose writings of the poets themselves. It is here that he meets with his second surprise. From Mr. Max Eastman, quoting Mr. Allen Tate, he discovers the following: "The poetical meaning is a direct intuition, realized prior to an explicit knowledge of the subject-matter of the poem." This means, says Mr. Eastman, not that

you should delve under what the poet is talking about, seeking to comprehend it, but that you should "read so fast that what he is talking about can't catch you".

This is perplexing, and upsetting. Our reader takes up an essay of Mr. T. S. Eliot's on Shakespeare — our two worthies of apparently opposing tendencies meet here, as subject and critic.

The poet who "thinks" [writes Mr. Eliot] is merely the poet who can express the emotional equivalent of thought. But he is not necessarily interested in the thought itself. By "thinking" I mean something very different from anything I find in Shakespeare. Mr. Lewis, and other champions of Shakespeare as a great philosopher, have a great deal to say about Shakespeare's power of thought, but they fail to show that he thought to any purpose; that he had any coherent view of life, or that he recommended any procedure to follow. "We possess a great deal of evidence," says Mr. Lewis, "as to what Shakespeare thought of military glory and martial events." Do we? Or rather did Shakespeare think anything at all? He was occupied with turning human actions into poetry. . . . The poet makes poetry, the metaphysician makes metaphysics, the bee makes honey, the spider secretes a filament; you can hardly say that any of these agents believes: he merely does.

A reader naturally, on being told these things, reflects first upon Thomas Hardy. Throughout Hardy's verse, and prose, he has found evidence of a rather settled belief in pessimism, of successive, and usually successful, efforts to orchestrate that belief in his work. What, then, is he to conclude about Hardy? Apparently, first, that Hardy was not a philosopher, since he "recommended no procedure to follow", or

conceived no unified *system* of thought; and, second, that Hardy did not think at all in his verse; he was merely a passive agent, transmuting in terms of emotion those ideas which filtered into his consciousness from the world about him. And here the reader becomes sceptical, because he refuses to regard Hardy as a sort of automatic writer, or a passive catalytic agent, as Eliot has elsewhere called every poet.

II

I do not believe that these poet-critics have in any deliberate way sought to enlighten us as to their procedure, though they have written no little about poetry. Certain of them have even signed manifestos, but these interesting documents look more like challenges than explanations. As for their criticism proper, it appears to me to suffer sadly from discursiveness and from a tendency to be casual and non-committal. There has never been a concentrated effort to acquaint us with the nature of their aesthetic; the reader, indeed, can search through all of Eliot's excellent body of comment without finding anything more than the suggestion of such an effort. And it is here that I must quarrel with them for not deigning to profit by the intention which prompted Wordsworth to write his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, thanks to which the aesthetic of a great deal of Romanticism was clarified near the beginning of that movement, and no end of time saved and misunderstanding avoided.

It seems, then, that the values in the achievement of these moderns are to be understood only through an analysis rooted in their scattered occasional essays and in their practice, for all poets worth anything more

pleasant than damnation write under the direction of certain principles. But before this analysis is offered, three frank admissions should be made.

The first is that the verse of the Eliot-Tate-Pound-Crane school is worth serious attention, a thing I believe emphatically. The second is that certain guiding aesthetic attitudes must be kept in mind if that verse is to be appreciated (everyone approaches any art with fairly definite attitudes, even though those attitudes are unformulated); that, in other words, a taste disciplined through a reading of the "major" poets of the nineteenth century does not necessarily equip one with an adequate basis for enjoyment. The third is that the word *school* is, as I use it, a loose word. These four poets have many individual characteristics, and there are many other important poets not considered here who respect and imitate their technique.

(1) These poets are "anti-poetic", both in their language and point of view. As for language, this statement means that the convention of sweetness in diction has been repudiated. Coleridge could describe a locality in *Kubla Khan* in the phrase,

*A savage place, as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover.*

But "soft melting phrases" like these do not go now. They are cloying and indefinite. They lack directness. Witness T. S. Eliot, describing a scene in *The Waste Land*:

*A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse.*

These lines aren't poetic, in the sense that they possess a lily-fingered prettiness. They are hard, masculine, direct. One seeks their value not in isolation, not in the occasional expression, but in totality — their value, that is, rests in an ability to communicate a single impression. It should be added, however, that there are separate lines in Tate and Eliot which are as "beautiful", in the accepted sense, as any I know of in poetry.

"The anti-poetic has many aspects," writes Mr. Wallace Stevens. "The aspect to which a poet is addicted is a test of its validity. Its merely rhetorical aspect is valueless. As an affectation it is a commonplace. As a scourge it has a little more meaning. But as a phase of a man's spirit, as a source of salvation, now, in the midst of a baffled generation . . . the anti-poetic acquires an extraordinary potency, especially if one's nature possesses that side so attractive to the furies." In its obvious phase, then, this preference for linguistic directness and toughness stems from a revolt against the dominant tendencies of Victorian versifiers.

But it has other implications a bit more subtle in character. In the fall of 1929 a controversy that was in progress among certain critics in America and Europe was brought into obscure focus in the *Modern Quarterly*. The question upon which this magazine issued its symposium was described as "The Revolution of the Word". What was the controversy about?

Briefly, as the phrase implies, it concerned itself with the matter of accepted word values. Those who were working for the revolution contended that centuries of use have tended to stratify our speech. "We are fighting", said Herbert Gorman, "for the freedom of

creative writers to achieve the most delicate nuances by remoulding our partially ossified language closer to the heart's and mind's and meaning's and spirit's desire." (The fight, he adds, is waged in the interest of the creative writer only: there will be no effort made to tamper "with the editorial page of the *New York Times*, the dramatic criticism of Mr. Gilbert Seldes, the *Memoirs of Mr. Jack Dempsey*", et cetera.) Mr. Eugene Jolas, editor of that unpredictable magazine *transition*, defended the liberties James Joyce has taken with language by saying that this writer "gives his words odors and sounds which the conventional standard does not know", and that Joyce is merely "revitalizing" English, exactly as Shakespeare did in his day. (Somebody should have remarked long ago that the disparity between the extravagance of most talk about Shakespeare and the paucity of valid knowledge of his plays is greater than can be found in the case of any writer the world has known.) "The Paris Group Manifesto" added that its signers were "tired of the spectacle of short stories, novels, poems, and plays still under the hegemony of the banal word, monotonous syntax, static psychology, and descriptive naturalism". Now when the banal word is "revitalized", it will be possible — because of the new suggestiveness it has acquired through the insertion of infixes, condensations, mergers, echoes, rhyme, slang, spoonerisms, and puns — to convey "a surface meaning, a sub-meaning, and a super-meaning". The word will be endowed with multitudinous facets.

For example: Joyce's word *shampain* describes a hangover more interestingly than does the old term headache; it contains a suggested pun on the cause of

our discomfort. *Clapplause*, similarly, is said to revive "the lacklustre term" *applause*. *Silva-lake* indicates water running through the forest (L. *silva*), *silva-moonlake* (silver-moon-lactic-lake) the water in the forest reflecting the moon and the milky way.

Gertrude Stein has continued this word revolution about as far as it can conceivably go. Her approach, however, has not been that of the writer who is striving for new syntheses, as has Joyce's; she is destructive in her procedure, interested only in breaking down all conventional word associations. Witness her comment in *Tender Buttons* entitled "A Piano":

The speed is open, if the color is careless, if the event is overtaken, if the selection of a strong scent is not awkward, if the button holder is held by all the waving color and there is no color, not any color. If there is no dirt in a pin and there can be none scarcely, if there is not then the place is the same as upstanding. There is no dark custom and it even is not acted in any such a way that a restraint is not spread. That is spread, it shuts and it lefts and awkwardly not awkwardly the centre is in standing.

I am not concerned here with the value of the contribution of these Revolutionists. To speak honestly, I think Joyce and Stein, in much of their later work, present the sad but familiar spectacle of artists once gifted but now inspirationally run down. It is a calamity that often happens. Matthew Arnold suffered it; Coleridge and Wordsworth suffered it. Keats would probably have suffered it had he lived much beyond the age of, say, thirty; his gift is tropical and adolescent in nature. Beaumont, Fletcher, Ford, and Shirley represent the same spectacle with regard to a literary

epoch; their work is heavy with the exhaustion of the poetic faculty of the Elizabethan Age.

What I *am* interested in is the effect of this controversy upon the poets who are the subject of this discussion. I believe that the revolution-in-the-word argument affected them in this way: it drove them, happily, to the use of a much more precise diction; it drove them at times almost to the use of an idiom comprehensible only to the gifted or the initiate. (Of course they were developing in this direction long before the revolution was crystallized; the forces which were operative in the case of Joyce and Stein were likewise operative in them. My interest here is in a relationship between the two groups.) It led them, at other times, to speak in dialectic.

Consider this comment in Eliot's essay on Marlowe: "The blank verse of Tennyson is cruder than that of a dozen contemporaries of Shakespeare." This statement gives one a shock, because as the average person uses the word *crude*, it is simply a false statement. But Eliot is careful to qualify the word. Tennyson's poetry is "cruder", he adds, "because less capable of expressing complicated, subtle, and surprising emotions". In this sense his meaning is not only clear, but discriminating, exact.

The same tendency is almost universally present in the verse of the Eliot-Pound-Tate-Crane school. Max Eastman, in his *Poets Talking to Themselves*, quotes from Crane's poem "At Melville's Tomb":

*And wrecks passed without sound of bells
The calyx of death's bounty giving back
A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph
The portent wound in corridors of shells.*

Now the word *calyx*, which Webster terms simply "the external, usually green or foliaceous part of a flower", is subject here to a bold and interesting interpretation. "This calyx", said Crane in a letter to Harriet Monroe, "refers in a double ironic sense both to a cornucopia and the vortex made by a sinking vessel. As soon as the water has closed over a ship this whirlpool sends up broken spars, wreckage, etc., which can be alluded to as *livid hieroglyphs*, making a *scattered chapter* so far as any complete record of the recent ship is concerned." The point is that the important phrases in this stanza are used in an idiomatic or special sense, and used exactly yet imaginatively.

Consider, again, four lines from Allen Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead":

*Stonewall, Stonewall; and the sunken fields of hemp.
Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill, Bull Run;
In the orient of that economy
You have cursed the setting sun.*

What does the word *orient* imply? Customarily, of course, *the east*, or *bright, lustrous*. It is derived from the Latin *oriens*, present participle of *oriri*, to rise. Knowing something of Mr. Tate's agrarian ideas, I take it he is saying in these lines that he curses the setting sun when he contemplates the *rising* of the economy (industrialism) which emerged in this country after the Civil War. But this is conjecture; he may mean something quite different. On the other hand, it may very well be true that the poet is avoiding predication entirely, except by implication, for reasons which will appear presently. So again, in two lines from "Death of Little Boys", Tate writes, after he has heard of the death of a child:

*The bleak sunshine shrieks its chipped music then
Out to the milkweed amid the fields of wheat.*

Perhaps he uses the word *chipped* in the unusual sense of *valueless*, *trivial*. Perhaps, on the other hand, he refers to the way the milkweed and wheat "break up" the rays of the sunlight. Perhaps he does not mean this at all. The point is that his meaning is special, narrowed, closer to exactness in the light of an idiomatic preconception.

Indeed, with respect to "meaning" in verse, it ought to be confessed at once that the poets under discussion do not seem to be in agreement. I have read somewhere a statement of Eliot's about Pound, to the effect that Eliot did not bother himself at all with the content behind the cosmology and symbolism of the *Cantos*, that he presumed Mr. Pound knew what he was doing, and that he took his integrity of purpose on faith. To me, the implication of this remark is that Pound is saying something but it is a private something. The above quotation from Crane implies the same thing — but implies also that if one has a gifted imagination he can understand what is being said. The truth about the matter, in my judgement, is brought out in a passage from I. A. Richards's book, *Science and Poetry*:

It is never what a poem says which matters, but what it is. The poet is not writing as a scientist. He uses [his] words because the interests which the situation calls into play combine to bring them, just in this form, into his consciousness as a means of *ordering, controlling, and consolidating* the whole experience. The experience itself, the tide of impulses sweeping through the mind, is the source and the sanction of the words. They repre-

sent the experience itself, not any set of perceptions or reflections, though often to a reader who approaches the poem wrongly they will seem to be only a series of remarks about other things. But to a suitable reader the words—if they actually spring from experience and are not due to verbal habits, to the desire to be effective . . . or to any other of the failings which prevent most people from writing poetry—the words will reproduce in his mind a similar play of interests putting him for a while into a similar situation and leading to the same response.

At any rate, this quotation describes my own approach to the greater part of this “new” poetry, and it is an approach which I believe capable of a great deal of satisfaction.

(2) The revolution-in-the-word argument probably affected these poets in yet another manner. It drove them to respect the principle of dissociation in poetry. I understand this principle in the following way: Ideas in verse often make for tyranny. Through them the poet is led to emphasize opinions he may hold as a religionist, or as a politician, or as an economist. And always, when such an emphasis is made vocal, the aesthetic values of his poetry suffer, for meaning limits and constricts appreciation; it calls in the reader for endorsement or resentment, making for the opposite of unhurried contemplation and distance. Moreover, a poet’s prime interest simply may not be centered in the communication of ideas so much as in states of feeling ideationally untranslatable. Whistler, in terming his canvasses “Nocturnes”, rebelled against this tyranny, a tyranny which is clearly scientific and practical in its demands. And Eliot writes, in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”,

*Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter. . . .*

suggesting far more than a weak allusion to John the Baptist — suggesting an idea which is incomprehensible or miraculous, and so freeing us, for the moment, from the domination of actuality.

(3) A corollary to the anti-poetic principle may now be indicated: This school of poets cares nothing for the desires, tastes, or preferences of the “middle class”. It is aristocratic and intellectual in its thinking. None of its members — not even Eliot — is popular in the sense that Longfellow, Poe, or even Shakespeare is popular. It appears that in part the same attitude which provoked critics like Mencken and Sinclair Lewis, during the nineteen-twenties, to satirize the habits of the typical American led these poets to forgo almost all interest in appealing to him. Their verse has not been contemptuous of the middle class (I except Pound here, and Eliot in his “young man carbuncular” passage in *The Waste Land*, and in other incidental references) so much as merely indifferent to it. Poe, an acknowledged artist, in formulating his theory of the nature and proper length of a poem (100 lines), kept this audience constantly in mind. To him, a great poem should be, in the literal sense, a popular one also. This school, by contrast, has courted neglect, ridicule, and poverty rather than prostitute its point of view. Crane’s suicide, indeed, appears in no small measure to have been caused by his inability, having repudiated the middle class, to find any other to which he could generally appeal, to find his place, that is, in what of the world was left to him.

(4) This repudiation leads naturally to a third characteristic principle of the group: they are obfuscationists. Mr. Gorman explains this principle by a reference to painting:

There is nothing behind the pigments that make up "The Horse Fair" [Rosa Bonheur]. It is all there to be observed at one glance, and it may be observed for an hour and the observer will discover nothing new creeping out of the picture and into his deepest consciousness. There are books like that. There is nothing behind the words. Once the book is read, it is a dead object. Behind the abstract painting, on the other hand, lurks more than the canvas. Through the pigments placed so curiously an intent, a design, an attempted fusion of aesthetic and spiritual connotatives struggles toward the observer.

So it should be with poetry, this school reasons. That poem which evokes an aesthetic response more delayed than immediate is the more satisfying, because it contains within itself an intellectual challenge, it stimulates a wider range of sensibilities, it is complex, as a highly civilized mind is complex. This explains the frequent use of conceits by these poets, the respect in which they hold Donne and the metaphysical writers generally. For the advantage of the conceit over the more simple simile or metaphor is that it leads to a more fruitful contemplation of the terms involved in its comparison; it is richer, aristocratic, and usually it calls also for greater conceptual precision.

This obscurity is always deliberate. The principle involved implies that the first draft of a poet's verses may appear in his judgement too smooth and simple to be agreeable, too Tennysonian. If so, he will revise the draft, labouring for greater concentration in content,

as well as for less metrical regularity. Mr. John Crowe Ransom states the idea in this way ("A Poem Nearly Anonymous", THE AMERICAN REVIEW, May, 1933): "It is not merely easy for the technician to write in smooth metres; it is perhaps easier than to write in rough ones, after he has once started; but when he has written smoothly and contemplates his work he is capable, actually, if he is a modern poet, of going over it laboriously and roughening it." The poet, moreover, may even attempt a certain duplicity: he may evolve, as Bridges is said to have done, a deceptive surface. That is, his verse will mean light and pleasant things to the many, but it will make for far different associations with the few. (This ability, incidentally, is what makes the appeal of Catholicism so nearly universal. More successfully than has been the case with any other religious denomination, it has been able to minister to all degrees of intelligence in terms of satisfying symbols. In the same service it can speak to Chesterton or to the unlettered immigrant. With one possible exception, as I see it, the Protestant faiths are powerless here.) At times, especially with Ezra Pound in his *Cantos*, the natural obscurity resulting from roughness and complexity is augmented by allusions to ideas almost devoid of currency except in the mind of the poet himself. (Compare Joyce's veiled references to jokes current in Dublin twenty-five years ago but since then well-nigh universally forgotten.) Or these allusions may be based upon highly esoteric erudition, yet accompanied by no key. Even Eliot, whose reading as reflected in *The Waste Land* was by no means as far from the customary as Pound's, found it necessary to publish fifty doubtfully explanatory notes to

that poem, making an average of one to every nine lines.

(5) The foregoing statements represent, in brief, certain attitudes which the reader must expect to face when he approaches the poetry of these modern writers. He might also find it advantageous to keep in mind a few minor devices they often employ. He should be prepared, for example, for rather frequent juxtapositions and contrasts—the setting of salient characteristics of one age over against the characteristics of another. See, in illustration, modernity's variant of the lovely lady motif of Goldsmith:

*When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand
And puts a record on the gramophone.*

Or that other passage in *The Waste Land* where a rather vulgar alcoholic session is breaking up, at the insistence of the barkeeper's "Hurry up, please, it's time" (to close the saloon):

*Goodnight Bill. Good night Lou. Good night May. Good
night.*

Ta. Ta. Good night.

And afterwards, in shattering contrast, comes the farewell of Ophelia in her mad scene:

*Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies,
Good night, good night.*

The same tendency reappears in Eliot's "Burbank with a Baedeker; Bleistein with a Cigar", in which Venice of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries is contrasted.

This trait suggests another that is often evident to

the reader of Eliot and Pound. Their work is in no small measure eclectic. The influence of the French symbolists of the past century — Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and Laforgue — is dominant in many of Eliot's poems. Webster, Donne, and Cowley have influenced him, further, in the direction of the metaphysical. The latter group comprises, to him, poets who "possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience". Thoughts *were* experiences to them, modifying their sensibilities; they turned them into poetry, instead of remaining content with "meditating on them poetically", as did the school of Tennyson.

Finally, the reader must remember that these writers are not expressing themselves, that is, the ideas which they hold, in their capacity as citizens of the state. This is the point of Eliot's quotation about Shakespeare's not being a thinker. The poet is great in proportion as he is able to extinguish his personality as a man; his progress is a "continual self-sacrifice". "Poetry", again, "is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion." The difference between these two states is the difference between description and creation. As MacLeish expresses the idea: "A poem should not mean, but be."

III

The purpose of this attempted analysis has been to indicate, in outline, the aesthetic of the Pound-Eliot-Tate-Crane school. Historically, it would be dangerous to question the validity of the point of view of these writers on the score that it is not traditional, for as I conceive it there have been two parallel tradi-

tions alive in English letters since Chaucer. For convenience one can perhaps term these traditions the facile and the difficult. Both have been alluded to already. The former idealizes clarity, balance, the normal, the easily apprehended. It is the sort of thing one gets in the *Canterbury Tales*, in Marlowe's drama, usually in Shakespeare's drama, in Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. It is the dominant tradition in our literature, dominant in the sense that it has been more generally allowed and extolled than the other. It was crystallized by Dryden and Pope in verse and, mainly, by the novelists in prose. It is the immediate way to popularity and to sizeable royalties.

Yet the tradition of the difficult has never been entirely displaced, and it has manifested itself in three interesting manners. The first, chronologically, I should term allegory. Notable among the examples of this manifestation are Chaucer's *Romance of the Rose*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, much of Blake's poetry, and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. Now the surface elements in these works are perhaps as readily apparent as any poetry can be: the successive adventures of the Red Cross Knight or of Sir Guyon in the *Faerie Queene*, considered purely as adventures, offer a problem to none. But it would be highly unfair to Spenser to surmise that the characters of his poem are conceived without symbolic intention. Indeed, some of the most fruitful Spenserian scholarship has been concerned with discovering that intention, and the nature of the problem involved unquestionably makes a full comprehension of the poem difficult.

Another manner of this tradition is that of the metaphysicals, which we identify with the dramatist Web-

ster, with Donne, Cowley, Crashaw, Marvell, and others. This school, in many respects like the school of Eliot, as we have seen, repudiated conventional sweetness in diction, relied upon elaborate figures of speech, usually metaphors, and on sentences which were involved, as were the thoughts they conveyed.

The third manner of this tradition I shall call the Miltonic. Milton, it is true, often used an involved sentence structure, but his poetry is complicated for a more primary reason: it is simply erudite. This poet, of all who have written in English, makes perhaps the most far-reaching intellectual demands upon his reader, as anyone can see who attempts to read his poetry without the aid of editors' notes. It appears to me that the Eliot-Pound-Crane-Tate school has in large measure merely combined these last two manners, and so far as this is true they are as traditional in their way as was Goldsmith.

IV

I believe that one of three rather obvious approaches is open to the reader of these poets. The first is the attitude of gush. The reader can proclaim the school "great" and "modern", with no idea of what those who compose it are about; his esteem can become blind undergraduate idolatry, which is disgusting. In the next place he can adopt the point of view so frequently, and sadly, evident in many college professors. He can apply to their achievement an essentially nineteenth-century critical standard, forgetting that his standard is one which these poets have found jejune and so discarded. This I term the Francis Jeffrey attitude, the attitude of that critic who insisted upon

judging Keats, Wordsworth, and the romantic poets generally in the light, or rather the darkness, of standards formulated under the pseudo-classical regimen of Pope. Emanating as it usually does from English specialists given to denouncing Jeffrey, and even Arnold, for failure to recognize the objectives of Romanticism, this second attitude is the most inexcusable of all, and is probably inexplicable to anyone not familiar with the "ossification" that occurs so fatally and so rapidly in the academic profession. I consider this approach, candidly, as added evidence of the fact that many of our professional appreciators, like many readers, are men who, as Mr. Cleanth Brooks expresses it, inhabit the Ivory Tower, separating their emotional life — at least that phase of it which they wish to contemplate in poetry — from the actual world, and most of all from their intellectual activities; and that the poetry they appreciate "presents certain conventional emotions, uncontaminated by the actual world and untroubled by the play of the mind".

The third approach that occurs to me is, simply, an approach founded in a serious and intelligent effort to discover the communicative values possible in the poetry of these men. I see no reason at all for suspecting them of charlatanism. I see ample evidence for believing that they are writers of extraordinary intelligence and imagination — witness the prose of Eliot and Tate. I think one is simply myopic to look in their verse for the kind of thing he has been given to expecting in poets like Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning. One should remember that the objectives of art, from generation to generation, change, as all other things we know about change; that formal con-

ventions periodically wear themselves thin, and that artists emerge who perceive their thinness keenly and rebel by discarding them. Whitman was such an artist, and twenty years ago we decided to appreciate him. The same thing that is true of formal conventions is true as well of linguistic conventions, and of all the generally recognized purposes of an art. These purposes have changed, over and over, in music, in painting, in sculpture, and in literature. They will keep on changing. This is merely one way of observing that we should recognize at the start what an artist is interested in communicating, and the principles that regulate his effort.

V

On the critical side, my remarks about these writers shall be brief, a matter of suggesting, mostly, the defects of their qualities. Their attitude concerning the nature of poetry is obviously narrow and, I must confess, when urged with the acerbity noticeable in many of their essays, a little irritating. They have pointed out ably — and for doing it we must be grateful — the heavy shortcomings of much Romantic and Victorian poetry. The school that meditated upon its subjects poetically, it is now apparent, exerted an influence on English verse that is still damaging beyond calculation. Yet it is important to remember that, after this school is weeded out, there yet remain a number of immortals who on one cardinal point differ radically from Eliot and Pound: an educated person can read Milton and Shakespeare and realize in large measure what they are saying. He can find in them an important element of classicism — clarity — which these

moderns appear studiously to ignore. In reading Shakespeare and Milton, moreover, one does not, though apprehending their *ideas*, feel any of that dread compulsion to activity which stems inevitably from the practical, as opposed to the aesthetic, approach to poetry. One appreciates their content, that is, without being assailed by the desire to *apply* it in experience. A fusion has occurred; and the result is not propaganda, but beauty.

It thus seems to me that Eliot and Pound have not adequately reckoned with this vastly important query: How is it that their respected masters — Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, even Donne at times — possess a well-recognized balance and lucidity, a balance and lucidity evident even to the “middle class”, while they possess so little? The only attention to this point I know of is in Eliot’s essay, “Tradition and Orthodoxy”. He states that, in verse, he writes as he must. (“I should say that in one’s prose reflections one may legitimately be occupied with ideals, whereas in the writing of verse one can only deal with actuality.”) This means, I presume, that for the chaos in his work his age is to blame. In a confused world, only confusion is possible; in a disillusioned world, only disillusionment is possible.

Let us grant for the moment that one’s age — a sprawling term — can be characterized in any unified way at all. By the same token, would not a respect for bourgeois conventions be the only attitude possible in an age that was dominantly conventional, like that of the Victorians? Yet, in spite of Tennyson’s easy acceptance of the ideals of that age, there were many among his contemporaries who found such acceptance

disagreeable, and avoided it. Arnold avoided it in poetry, so did James Thomson, so did Swinburne, so did Hardy. Donne, in his day, repudiated the convention of courtliness, his lyrical inheritance from Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Marlowe, and a host of others. It seems then that, on the question of clarity, to break with Tennyson is to break with Shakespeare, though I am the first to apologize for the juxtaposition of names. The important fact is that as Robert Frost has said, "the business of art is to strip life to form"; and the argument about life's being more formless now than usual is, as I see it, irrelevant.

I realize that a poet must have a point of view. I realize that the opposite of having a point of view is represented by cosmopolitanism, intellectualism, the new emancipation, and other virtues of the damned. But I also realize that one's point of view may become so restrictive as to defeat itself, can grow in time to suggest nothing so much as Robinson Jeffers's symbol of Incest, where the objectives of the individual are all private, "turned inward", and come at last to negate themselves. In other words, an interest on the part of the poet in a fairly general communication of experience appears the most healthy trait he can possess.

This repudiation of the "middle class" — another all but meaningless term, of course — is also lamentable to me because it offends a certain prejudice I dare say not wholly private. I have long thought that if the poet is ever to approximate in modern life the position of the bard, such as Homer enjoyed, or the Old English *scop*, or, to a less degree, Chaucer and Shakespeare; that if poetry is ever again to become something genuinely vital to our lives, the poets who write

it must first become interested in us, rather than exclusively in themselves. Perhaps it would be better to say that our poets must become more classical — that is, more concerned with those elements of their own experience which are fairly universal. They might also suffer their conception of the “middle class” to be in slight measure exalted. Poe — whom in many ways I dislike — suffered it, as we have seen, and yet he remains the supreme American artist.

But even this last remark requires a certain emendation. These poets are products of their age — an age which in art fell heir to as vulgar and as sentimental a tradition (the Victorian) as any with which I am acquainted in literature. It was a tradition characterized mainly, as John Crowe Ransom has pointed out, by the desire to merge beauty with goodness; by the desire, that is, to *saddle* beauty with goodness. It was a noble desire, to be sure, and the Greeks, a civilized people, realized it. But in our own civilization it produced not an Aeschylus and a Sophocles but a Longfellow, a Felicia Hemans, and a William Cullen Bryant. Seeing this result, the writers I have been discussing appear to have concluded that the only way poetry could be salvaged from the wreck of Victorianism would be through divesting it of idea and philosophy — in general, of any predication whatever. Poetry, in brief, had to be purified. I believe they were perfectly right. If one consequence of their rightness has been that their content is sometimes more tantalizing than satisfying, then the blame should be placed squarely where it belongs: upon that age whose excesses drove them, in turn, to excess.

REVIEWS

The Rediscovery of the Middle Ages *

THE movement called the Enlightenment, growing out from the Renaissance and culminating in the eighteenth century but still widely alive today in its multifarious after-effects, has for its reverse side the *Endarkenment* of the Middle Ages. Those two phenomena are two sides of one thing. Without the *Endarkenment* as background, there would have been in the foreground a notable luminescence, indeed, but not *the* Enlightenment. If it had not been for the modern break with the mediaeval mind, the rejection of it as irrational and darkly unprogressive, modern rationalism could not possibly have seemed brightly rational nor modern progressivism wonderfully progressive. The immense submission of philosophy during the past three centuries to the concepts and methods of physical science — surely an outstanding episode in the history of human superstition — could not have appeared enlightened if the meaning of thirteenth-century thought had not become fully *endarkened*.

Accordingly, the lightening of the *Endarkenment* has proceeded in equal pace, since the end of the eighteenth century, with the darkening of the Enlightenment. The latter has descended stage by stage from the Wits of the aristocratic age to the populace,

* MEDIAEVAL RELIGION AND OTHER ESSAYS *by Christopher Dawson* (SHEED & WARD. 195 pp. \$2.00).

and to populace-minded writers, of the present time: it has sunk from a flare of select spirits to a "gloomy light much like a shade" of widespread dying embers. For the beacons of the Enlightenment turned out to be mainly brilliant bonfires. After usefully destroying much accumulated rubbish, they bequeathed to the nineteenth century a sinking spiritual twilight. Already, however, the rediscovery of the Middle Ages had begun. The history of this movement will some day be written, from its first Romantic gropings to its culmination in (perhaps) the twenty-first century. But if the story is fully told it will have to be two-sided. It will show the descent of Rationalism from Hume, let's say, to Professor Dewey and Earl (Bertrand) Russell, and the rise of spiritual reason from the shadowy haze of Coleridge to the daylight of A. E. Taylor, Von Hügel, and Maritain.

Among the distinguished thinkers who in the twentieth century are retrieving the meaning of the Middle Ages with a fullness of enlightenment not possible before, Mr. Christopher Dawson, if not the most powerful and penetrating, is the most comprehensive and, to use a popular term, the most "social-minded". Competent in many fields of learning, he brings all his knowledge to bear on the problem of society: he studies the origin and growth, the values, sins, and prospects, of Occidental culture. And for him the chief crisis in the plot of the whole complex drama occurs in the height of the Middle Ages; *i.e.*, the period from the tenth to the thirteenth century. For it was just then, he claims, and not under the Roman Empire, that Europe first became Europe. It was only then that she achieved a cultural pattern sufficiently

comprehensive to bring into fruitful co-operation all her great inheritances, racial, political, religious, and intellectual. And though that harmony was transient in its outward form, the lesson of subsequent history, according to Mr. Dawson, is that the essentials of the mediaeval pattern must now be restudied, resumed, and carried on if Europe is again to achieve anything like a real unity. The extraordinary vitality of Europe in the past four centuries, the very energy which has produced those assertive sectional interests which now threaten to destroy or debase her civilization, was generated by *Europe as a society*, and can be maintained and controlled only if that society is reconstituted in modern form.

Mr. Dawson's present book, consisting of six essays on various aspects of mediaeval culture, should be read as a transition from his *The Making of Europe* to a work on the Middle Ages which, so his publishers announce, is still in preparation. Here he makes clear that the Middle Ages, so far from being "the ages of Faith in the sense of unquestioning submission to authority and blind obedience", were a period of spiritual struggle and incessant mental and social change. The restoration of contact with the main tradition of Greek thought—which had been lost in the Dark Ages, not through the working of Christianity but because of the internal decay of Roman civilization—is not only one of the chief mediaeval achievements: "It is a turning-point in the history of world civilization, for it marks the passing of the age-long supremacy of Oriental and eastern-Mediterranean culture and the beginning of the intellectual leadership of the West." The quick absorption by the West of

Graeco-Arabic science in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is an extraordinary event. The "modern errors" of the new thinkers were loudly condemned by traditionalists and there was a real danger that Western culture would be sacrificed, like the culture of Islam, to a conflict between theology and science. This was prevented, however, by "the eagerness and intellectual courage" of the contemporary leaders of Christian thought.

But Mr. Dawson knows that the greatest achievement of the Middle Ages was not intellectual synthesis, much less ecclesiastical organization: it was a "deepening of the spiritual life by a new type of religious experience". This grew out from a fusion of the lofty mysticism of the East with Western religious humanism and found its concrete expression in what may be called, as the author says, "the passion of the humanity of Christ". This acme of the mediaeval cultural harmony is all too briefly treated by the author. And the reader is surprised to find him declaring in his chapter on "The Romantic Tradition" that if we wish to find "the quintessence of the mediaeval spirit, we cannot do better than to follow the example of the Romantics and look for it in the age and country of the Troubadours". He shows elsewhere that the courtly idealism of the Troubadours, Arabic in its origin, was essentially materialistic and anti-religious in its spirit; which mediaeval Christianity, by reason of its catholic scope, was able to attach and to transmute in a manner that looks miraculous. Why, then, call the Provençal idealism "the quintessence of the mediaeval spirit"? Apparently because Mr. Dawson is here anxious to demonstrate that "the

rediscovery of the Middle Ages by the Romantics is an event of no less importance in the history of European *thought* [the italics are the reviewer's] than the rediscovery of Hellenism by the Humanists" of the Renaissance. However, his book culminates in an excellent essay on *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, a poem deeply typical of the Middle Ages just because it is dominated by "the passion of the humanity of Christ". Mr. Dawson does not say, but he leads the reviewer to say, that that religious experience, re-animated in modern form and again guiding philosophy, would be the chief light to enlighten our darkened Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment, though rooted in the Renaissance, grew rapidly away from the best spirit of that period. There is a deep gulf between the Cartesian rationalism and that catholic philosophy, achieved in the Middle Ages but not yet fully and imaginatively humanized, which underlies the great art of the Renaissance — the poetry, for instance, of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. Now, in various passages of Mr. Dawson's works he shows a disposition to deny the distinctiveness of Renaissance humanism, to merge it into the rationalistic humanitarianism which was its bastard offspring. To lose the spirit of the Renaissance in regaining that of the Middle Ages would be most unfortunate. And the root of the trouble (it plainly appears in his present book) is that he has not yet discerned a thoroughly *internal* cause of the decline of the mediaeval harmony as distinct from subsidiary factors — a deficiency comparable with those inherent causes of decline which in his previous books he discovered in previous civilizations. Consequently in his

view the mediaeval culture seems so very exceptional that it quite overshadows the Renaissance, wherein the sources of decline are very patent to him. But fortunately Mr. Dawson's thought is still in process of development and may fill in its lacunae. And his present book is packed with vital facts and ideas which Americans, in particular, stand very much in need of. For the stream of American civilization — rising in the decline of the Renaissance and cut off from the mediaeval spirit except in its narrow Puritan form, then suddenly broadening out in the later eighteenth century — has been exceptionally shallowed and darkened by the Enlightenment. Our great universities, in New York and elsewhere, which unlike Oxford and Paris have no mediaeval "foundations", may perchance brighten and deepen their wide-flowing radiance if they foster within their walls the study of Mr. Dawson's works.

G. R. ELLIOTT

For a Modern Theology *

LINKED by a common caption *God and Creation*, these two books by the professor of philosophy in the University of California represent the author's mature thought on the problems of cosmological interpretation. In earlier works he reached what he calls "the cosmological hypothesis of a spiritual control which

* GOD: A Cosmic Philosophy of Religion by John Elof Boodin (MACMILLAN. 240 pp. \$2.00).

THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE UNIVERSE by John Elof Boodin (MACMILLAN. 519 pp. \$3.00).

gives measure and order to the process of nature". This hypothesis, bringing him to the study of God's relation to nature and to man, now issues definitely in a natural theology which he elaborates in the two books under review. The second of these is addressed more particularly to students of philosophy, while the companion volume is offered "to all who have an imaginative and religious interest in the life of man in the universe".

In his foreword to his volume on God the author sets forth the scope of the two books. His aim is to offer to our confused generation a constructive effort to furnish an idealistic world-view in line with the progress of history and science. He believes that his entire theory of the relations of God and the universe "is consistent with the fundamental intuitions of Christianity, if not with its traditional theology". The Catholic Church, he points out, has its own official theology as well as its official theologian of the mediæval tradition. The official theologian was Aquinas, who vitalized the tradition of his day by fresh contact with Greek thought and summed up the past into a great synthesis, "but, like every great thinker, he was part of his age and was limited by the beliefs and outlook of his age". So there is need today, it seems, of a fresh interpretation growing out of the intellectual climate in which we live. This need is made all the more urgent, in Professor Boodin's view, by the fact that Protestantism has always lacked a theology of its own and stands very much in need of one today.

He then proceeds to tell us the lines along which we must seek this fresh interpretation. Basing his plea on the arguments that materialistic naturalism has sapped

the foundations of the old theology, that there is a general confusion about moral standards, that the Great War has produced disillusionment among vast masses of human beings, and that technical progress has antiquated our economic system, he calls for a new deal in the spiritual realm:

We need a new interpretation of religion which shall ally it with the upward striving of man and reinforce what is best in human nature. We need a conception of God which shall give meaning to this pluralistic, temporal world and which shall also furnish the inspiration to create a better world. We need a new Plato with philosophy and vital faith, with poetry and logic, with a vision of a just state and a conception of God which inspires man to work and to sacrifice for the highest ideals.

Our author warns us that, unless we succeed in reaching some such conception of God as this, our conventional Christianity, as an effective force in Western civilization, shall surely perish. But he does not think that Christianity itself shall perish. "Christianity is the good life, and the good life has its inspiration in the eternal source of goodness." It is born out of the depths of the human soul, he tells us, and it shall surely recreate itself in humanity's heart and go still higher.

In working out his idea of God our author aggressively takes the anti-intellectualist standpoint so dear to the modern philosopher. He tells us, for example, that knowledge is at best a poor and abstract affair compared to the richness of human experience, that we have an immediate experience of the quality of the divine in our experience of reality, and that the reality of the divine requires no proof. Indeed, proof, as the

logician understands the word, is anathema to him. "Nothing of importance can be proved." Conversely, nothing of importance can be disproved. Kant, for instance, did not disprove the classical arguments for God's existence. "Kant merely destroyed certain *a priori* arguments for the fictitious abstraction of the unconditioned." Newton, on the other hand, was a great metaphysician because of the soundness of his intuitions; his conception of God was "an hypothesis of physics and cannot be touched by *a priori* arguments".

Now, when modern philosophers reject knowledge in favour of what they call the richness of human experience, they might be surprised to be reminded that, seven centuries ago, Aquinas laid down the principle that the act of knowing is primarily intellectual but is not exclusively so. Mind meant for him something more than Reason. Here is the Thomist phrase: "Mind embraces the will and the intellect and all those potencies which in their acts are free from material conditions." Knowledge, therefore, is grasped by the whole being. It involves an intellectual coefficient, but it also involves an affective factor.

Secondly, the "religious experience" of the moderns in search of God is simply a new name for old ways of thinking. To the early Fathers it was known as a natural, spontaneous way of knowing (*cognitio naturalis inserta*), not in the sense that the knowledge of God was innate in man but rather that the urge or drive by which God was to be attained was innate and capable of reaching its cognitional objective. In the era of scholasticism it was known as "confused knowledge" (*quaedam communis et confusa Dei cog-*

nitio). It was taken to mean that something is vaguely known without logical analysis or without the reflective discernment of its parts or predicates.

This "confused knowledge" is of two kinds. In the first place, it may prescind entirely from reason and base itself altogether upon a natural inclination to seek the Good. In the Thomist teaching, nothing finite can give rest to this urge. There is, in every man, a spiritual yearning beyond the things of sense. Confusedly, implicitly, almost instinctively, man stretches forth after the Supreme Good. Thus, the human soul has a desire for God — a knowledge of God, if you like; but *in confuso*. This kind of knowledge of God would seem to bear a striking resemblance to the non-rational "religious experience" of the moderns.

This "confused knowledge" of God may be also intellectual, in the sense that it is an immediate inference which is not further clarified. It is the result of a reasoning process of a desultory and spontaneous kind, a process which is attendant upon the application of first principles to the things of the universe. It is, as Aquinas teaches, congenital and natural and is as universal as the desire for happiness. Thus, by a natural reasoning process, however tenuous and spontaneous it may be, man comes immediately to some knowledge of God. From the order of the universe the human reason readily infers the existence of God. A simple man, whether Christian or pagan, might not speak with our author's eloquence of "the cosmological hypothesis of a spiritual control which gives measure and order to the universe" but in some confused way he would attain to a knowledge of a Ruler of the world.

But now scholasticism adds yet a third kind of knowledge, which indeed is the only knowledge worth the attention of the philosopher. To the confusedly intellectual knowledge of God and to the affective appreciation to which that knowledge gives rise it adds a reflective intellectual analysis which takes the implicit knowledge of God and makes it explicit and distinct. This is cognition in the full sense of the word. It is the result of argument, of deduction, of proofs. It is definitely *a posteriori*, arguing ever from the given of reality, rejecting always the mirage of intuition. From Aristotle onwards, it has been the teaching of the *philosophia perennis* that the universe is a single ordered hierarchy. By reflection on that order we may logically proceed to prove the existence of the Cause behind it all.

What might be called the cosmological implications of the author's conception are worked out in the second of the books under review. There he outlines his theory of the relation between God and the universe, discussing three types of interpretation of evolution as the historical process whereby the present order of nature has been established. He begins with preformation, the notion that evolutionary development is latent in the process so that the later forms and stages are really an unfolding, and he salutes Scotus Erigena as the great preformist of modern thought. In his second section he treats of emergence, which he explains as the theory that new characteristics and structures appear in the process with no apparent guidance either from within or from without. Finally, he comes to creation, a word which he indicates as meaning that new forms, characters, and stages occur in

the evolutionary process under the guidance of an actuality which controls and animates the course of history.

In this third section he deprecates the introduction of what he calls the monistic conception of creation — creation out of nothing — into Christian thought, telling us that in the third century there was a sudden change from the cosmological dualism and ethical pluralism of Plato to the monistic doctrine of an omnipotent Creator. His own theory is that the cosmos as a whole never began, that its constitution is constant, and that it is our faith in that constancy which inspires our venture to decipher the past and the future from the moment of history in which we live.

He sets forth his philosophy of God-and-Creation with a sincerity that pervades every page of these two books. Equipped with an unusually wide knowledge of the works of contemporary writers in his field, he is gifted, besides, with a delightful prose style. But the scholastic reader will have little difficulty in recognizing many of the arguments, for he has already encountered them in the works of mediaeval philosophers. Our author uses them as constructive elements in the elaboration of his thesis. The mediaevalists treated them as objections to be solved.

The question that comes naturally to the reader's mind as he finishes the two books is concerned with the author's avowed scope. Has Professor Boodin really succeeded in presenting a theology which shall be acceptable to modern men and especially to Protestants, as he set out to do? It would be a rash man who would answer that question in the affirmative. Dr. Boodin makes no distinction between revealed reli-

gion and natural theology; he boldly throws aside the riches of more than seventeen centuries of Christian thought and Christian life; in the end, he rests in a conception of God that is based upon affective feeling or upon vague intuition rather than upon the knowledge of God's real existence, such as is given by the rigid processes of thought that are the mark of the *philosophia perennis*. He cannot be said to have succeeded in showing — if indeed the attempt was not foredoomed to failure — how, by rejecting both revelation and the use of the human reason, man can attain a knowledge of the Divine.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

Art and Housing*

MR. WHITAKER has accomplished two tasks in his history of architecture: he has written the obituary of an art, and heralded the birth of a new industry. Designed to be the final vindication of the "true" elements in architecture, his book is perhaps the completest expression of current misconceptions as to the precise nature of the oldest among arts that is likely to be written. All of the theories so dear to Modernists are here expounded in a lucid and readable manner: architecture, we learn for the *n*th time, is craftsmanship; and craftsmanship is the science of building rationally, thoroughly, and sensibly. The decorative and monumental qualities in architecture were forcibly and unjustly introduced by the powers of

* *FROM RAMESES TO ROCKEFELLER* by Charles Harris Whitaker (RANDOM HOUSE. 360 pp. \$3.50).

tyranny and superstition. "Tomb and temple were to be used for thousands of years [after the rise of Egyptian architecture] to turn men's minds away from the pleasant task of building a secure and stable way of life on earth. Builders were to labour for some other purpose than that of their own gain and benefit, as they steadily sacrificed themselves to the life to come."

In other words architecture became an affirmation in stone and mortar that craftsmen, like other men, cannot live by bread alone — a thoroughly unmodern notion which we are in the process of jubilantly discarding in favour of a more attractive and less demanding materialism. The history of architecture thus becomes the drama of a struggle between craftsmanship and art — or Mammon and God; and the tragedy of it — for Modernists at least — lies in the fact that craftsmanship has never got the upper hand; always the mason and the constructor have been obliged to heed the voice of art, either within themselves or in the demands of their temporal or ecclesiastical masters. Nor has this thralldom ceased with the decline of the prestige of the Church and the death of aristocratic patronage; today Rockefeller Center is not "pure" architecture because it is a monument to predatory capitalism; and if a true architecture is to arise it will do so only within an order which can secure for everyone shelter, food, and a decent living, and put an end to the acquisitive struggle. "Architecture might then be defined as a work of arranging agreeable and convenient buildings in pleasant surroundings. . . . Instead of being known as an 'art', or as that damnable and completely undefinable bit of

snobbishness, a 'fine art', it would be esteemed as a healthy and normal process of doing healthy and normal things related to the general perfecting of buildings and their surroundings."

It must be confessed that if Capitalism is the only obstacle in the way of this consummation then it certainly deserves to be treated a little more kindly. For the issue is not whether we will have better housing; that has never been the concern of architecture and never will be; it is a question of the further existence of architecture as an art — yes, as a fine art, distasteful as the connotation of exclusiveness may be. That is the threat which Modernism presents.

Only a mentality fundamentally hostile to the real meaning of art in architecture can compare Radio City and Egypt. Rockefeller and Rameses are both accused of subordinating craftsmanship to other values — presumably spiritual ones; but it is difficult to see much of a similarity between the otherworldliness of a Pharaoh and the strident materialism of an American millionaire — except that both of them want "art" in their architecture. What Mr. Whitaker has given us is a definition of architecture in terms of labour, materials, methods of construction; the artistic creative impulse, which begins where these leave off, is ignored.

The result is not so much an extremely one-sided view of architecture as it is an account of the difficulties of the building industry in meeting the fancy and high-flown demands of employer and artist through the ages. Of course the only way of settling a disagreement of this sort is to suppress one of the parties to it; and that is what Mr. Whitaker proposes: the eliminat-

ing of the capitalist-patron and his minion the architect in favour of the workingman.

Well, there is little to be gained in disputing such a thesis as this. It is part of a view of the world which has no place for the artist except as an agent for the most obvious type of propaganda. And it is not only the artist who is degraded, either: the workman himself is conceived of as an animal which happens to use tools to get for itself shelter and food and comfort; further demands on his energies would be tyrannical and oppressive. That his work might have a spiritual function is apparently rubbish, and it is because we are so convinced that it *is* rubbish that our efforts to make the world better are concentrated, not on giving an increased meaning to the work in the worker's life, but, on the contrary, decreasing his work, and stigmatizing it as something unpleasant that must be done in order to live. And consequently a contemptuous disregard for art as a factor in building, and a corollary overemphasis on better housing is the order of the day among advanced architects.

From Rameses to Rockefeller affords an excellent understanding of the process by which architects cease to be artists and become first engineers, then sociologists, then Communists or near-Communists. Previous works of this sort assumed an objective and hard-boiled tone in order to impress the Babbitry with the underlying respectability of the art; and while this book flirts with Union Square quite as shamelessly as did the former with Wall Street, it is none the less a sincere and well written *exposé* of Modernism, and quite on a par with the persuasive "Kulturbolschewismus" of Lewis Mumford. BRINCKERHOFF JACKSON

A "Century of Progress"*

THE first two-thirds of this book are as good as anything Mr. Bertrand Russell has ever written; and to say that is to say a great deal, for of all the so-called "scientific" minds of the present day, his seems to possess the widest historic horizon, to be most aware of the ineluctable needs and desires of mankind (apart from some high-flown theory which abstracts from man half his qualities), and to possess that natural scepticism and refusal to entertain credulity which one would naturally suppose to be proper to a scientific mind. In short, Mr. Russell has qualities quite lacking in Jeans or Eddington. And he is moreover a writer, which Whitehead (Heaven knows) is not.

The present volume represents the most complete and comprehensive survey he has yet undertaken, the record of the forces — economic, political, cultural — which shaped, first in England, then in America, and finally in Germany, that which we call the nineteenth century — which to many of those who recall it still seems, as compared to the present day, a "century of progress". Progress might indeed be termed the specific illusion of the nineteenth century; and beginning from the dynastic politics of the Congress of Vienna, in 1814, down to the day in 1914 when the naked economic forces let loose by industrial nationalism made war inevitable, one feels the *leit-motif* of progress accompanying every chord and every dissonance. Nor will it do to suppose, as the worst sort of historians only too readily suppose, that this belief

* FREEDOM VERSUS ORGANIZATION by Bertrand Russell (NORTON. 471 pp. \$2.50).

or illusion was peculiar to the nineteenth century alone. It pervaded the elegant worldliness of the eighteenth; it motivated the most advanced souls of the Renaissance; and its germ might be found in certain mystics of the thirteenth century, such as, for example, Joachim de Flora. The only respect in which the nineteenth century differed from the centuries that had preceded it, was in the fact that, thanks to the doctrine of evolution, the new range of scientific invention and discovery, and the mushroom growth of political democracy, the period of which Mr. Russell treats did not in the main apply any sustained scepticism to the theory of unlimited progress, until such world-shattering events as the Great War, the Russian Revolution, and the breakdown of political democracy showed it how far it was really mistaken.

Mr. Russell is no doubt aware of all these facts; and his motive in becoming a historian is to show how given the "economic technique, the political theory, and the exceptional individuals" at work within the period 1814-1914, the result arrived at was unavoidable, barring such chance accidents as might have made the catastrophe a little slower in happening. He is therefore to be congratulated in not having supposed that the history of such a century (still overshadowing our own feebler and less permanent century) could be dismissed, as the Marxians would dismiss it, simply as representing the growth of large-scale capital, the rise of plutocracy within democracy, and the struggle between the possessors and the dispossessed. History, as Mr. Russell says, is not yet a science in the sense that its actions and reactions can be explained on the basis of any single theory. The

most discouraging aspect of the present period of dictatorships and semi-dictatorships is less the fact that they exist (given a large enough economic crisis and the inability of democracy to deal with it, a dictatorship becomes a necessity) than the fact that they probably stake too much upon a single theory, a pseudo-scientific formula, to work out the destinies of the human beings under their control.

They exist, nevertheless, because — although Mr. Russell does not quite fully point this out — the “two main causes of chance” which he mentions in his preface and throughout the volume as having operated in the nineteenth century, *i.e.*, “the belief in freedom which was common to Liberals and Radicals, and the necessity of organization which arose through industrial and scientific technique”, both broke down, and that at about the same time. As he says, both freedom and organization advanced concurrently throughout the nineteenth century, with the result that we live in a world which today exists in a state of disorder bordering upon chaos, and in which perhaps only such fiats as a dictatorship can utter, have any validity. The outcome, therefore, of the division in aim between emotional liberalism with its individualistic accent, and the abstract formal logic of scientific invention and technique — which division persisted throughout the century under Mr. Russell’s survey — is necessarily such a state of world chaos as we are witnessing at the present day.

The villains therefore of this tragedy are certainly not those who either sentimentally or emotionally upheld the cause of democratic progress, despite all evidence to the contrary, like Rousseau, Shelley, Byron,

or in America, Thomas Jefferson, nor are they those who — probably also for reasons not unconnected with their normal human feelings — became reactionaries, such as Thomas Carlyle, the Russian Czars, and most of the Popes of that period. The real villains were a small body of theorists who invented, without any basis in scientific or historic fact, an ethic and dynamic which set the wheels of mechanical progress turning so that nothing could possibly check them. These men Mr. Russell calls the philosophic radicals: Malthus, Bentham, Ricardo, James Mill. The analysis which Mr. Russell offers of their motives and temperaments is the best thing in this volume. To attempt to summarize it here is to do it an injustice, so I can only point out one or two of the most striking features which these men shared.

In the first place, then, these men combined two things: the belief in virtue, and the belief in self-interest. They assumed that universal benevolence and the urgings of competitive personal ambition could be combined in perfect harmony and could be made to work for human progress thanks to the spread of political democracy, industrial enterprise, and universal education. In order to prove their own case against the most important man they produced — the rank pessimist Malthus — they erected a monstrous idol, all calculation and no feeling, called it "The Economic Man", and bade mankind worship the new god. That they succeeded completely in England and in America is the burden of Mr. Russell's argument. They succeeded in England because the complete breakdown of the country-house and manor-house system at the time of the Napoleonic wars, had driven

the yeomen off the land, had deprived them of the last of their common rights, and had created a new false prosperity based on unlimited amounts of sweated factory labour. They succeeded in America because the vast potential resources of an unknown and as yet unpenetrated frontier made that prosperity which machinery, democracy, and individual competition could offer, more than a theorist's dream. And in the rising power of these two countries, England and America, they found also a lever to force still a third country, Germany, to follow their example, in a more thorough, heavy-handed, imperialistic, and brutally direct fashion — thus bringing about not only the War, but the present collapse of civilization, and the advent of a Communism inspired by nothing but the most sordid motives of revenge and hate.

Such is the story that Mr. Russell unfolds, and the way of his telling it is both lucid and persuasive, that of a master-ironist who is neither carried away by indignation nor by enthusiasm. He shows — but this is by implication rather than by any direct statement — that these English philosophical radicals whose intellectual doctrines he examines, were far more responsible for, and far more guilty as being the chosen agents in promoting, the catastrophe in which we live today — with democracy completely sold out in advance to plutocracy, and nothing but the most unashamed Marxism as the alternative — than any of the American millionaires who fastened themselves on this country at the end of the Civil War. The new millionaires — men like Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Rockefeller, even Gould — to do them justice, simply took advantage of economic opportunities and, half the time,

did not know what they were doing. The little handful of philosophical radicals whose activities Mr. Russell so ably describes, knew perfectly well what they were doing, and did it: when it was cold-bloodedly contrary to every ethical teaching of higher religion, and possibly contrary, as well, to human nature.

The doctrine these men taught, allied to the inevitable and dramatic upsurge of nationalist sentiment (for nature abhors a vacuum) that came over the world in the wake of Napoleon, produced the progressive nineteenth century which now lies in ruins all about us, and whose outward forms are only being maintained because someone with a vested interest wishes them to be maintained — not because they any longer command either faith or hope or respect. Or if they still do command any faith or hope or respect — these expedients of industrial enterprise, of virtue in individual competition, of lip-service to democracy which conceals the most complete parasitism possible on plutocracy — if they do command any faith or hope or respect, it is only in England and in America. In Russia, in the Far East, and in the major part of Europe, men must now remain deaf and blind to such notions, as Spengler has said. If they do accept the technique, they will not accept the form in which this technique was sold to the world. They are not Gradgrinds and Chadbands and Wackford Squeers — I beg their pardon — they are not Millses and Benthams and Ricardos.

The question is, what can the West do — and by the West I mean England and America — to prevent the vast competitive process, based on false intellectual premises concerning man, from working itself out until

both countries become what, it is said, Germany has now become, utterly the property of one single super-financier, and therefore governed by a dictatorship which though outwardly nationalistic is inwardly more purely mercenary in motive than the worst form of dictatorship that governed the decadent Roman Empire? Russell raises this question, but he does not answer it. He is aware that Carlyle and Bismarck and even the Popes and Czars — the great reactionaries in short — were outwardly at least far more in accordance with the true facts of human nature, with all those local loyalties, familiar decencies, and human “overbeliefs”, than were any of the Radicals, whether philosophical or unphilosophical. He is also aware that Marxism, in its present form in Russia, represents a radical solution that the Western world, with its Christian heritage, cannot fully accept. But what is the thing that will save us from the monopolist state — the kind of state that is now being tried out in Italy and in Germany? Is there nothing for us to do but to scrap, and that completely, the last fragments of the Jeffersonian tradition, and to admit that an absolute monarchy is the only solution? Mr. Russell does not answer this question. He says, on the last page of his book:

In those aspects of politics that depended upon modern economic developments, the War was the first large-scale expression of forces which had been operative for fifty years, and are still growing stronger. The development of nationalistic monopolies, particularly in iron and steel . . . was and is a more important factor in world politics than most men know or statesmen will admit. The same causes that produced war in 1914 are still operative, and

unless checked by international control of investment and of raw material, they will inevitably produce the same effect, but on a larger scale. It is not by pacifist sentiment, but by world-wide economic organization that mankind is to be saved from collective suicide.

If Mr. Russell means by these words that the world-wide economic organization he envisages will recall however faintly the present central international ring of banking interests: the Bank of England, the Bank of France, Messrs. Morgan and the Federal Reserve System of America, then we may well despair. If he means instead that a new economic order might perhaps be created by entirely local effort, disregarding the megalopolitan urge of central financial interests, and grounding itself once more in the fundamental truths of Christianity, then I can possibly agree with his statement. But he does not seem really to see that the alternative exists, or that these issues, too, are at stake. This is the only fault I can find in what seems to me otherwise a charming, intelligent, wise, and witty book.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER